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THE CAMPBELLS.

A NOVEL.

"I would not champ the hard cold bit
——— of what the world thinks fit,—
But take God's freedom—using it."

E. B. BROWNING.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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BIBLIOTHECA·BODLEIANA·

THE CAMPBELLS.

CHAPTER I.

EGERTON had not ridden many miles before he became aware that his horse could not keep up the pace with which he had started, and that if he did not moderate it a little, the poor animal would be quite knocked up before he reached Hebworth.

"I could have told him that at first," muttered John between his teeth, when he saw his master rein in. "But Lor'a'mity! what does he know of 'ossflesh? Well, I suppose he does

want to see the old guvnor very much afore he kicks. I never saw mine though after he got lagged that last time, just like an old stoopid as he was. Fourteen year is a precious long time to give a man merely for a spree with the keepers, and because a gun went off by accident, and damaged one of 'em a bit. Well, well, he arnt never borne no ill will to me 'cause of that little hawkudness in the family—very much the contrairy, and I hope he may shave through somehow still, though they do say he is uncommon bad."

Egerton having slackened his pace a little, John considered that a favourable moment had arrived for putting in a gentle remonstance. He accordingly rode up to his master's side, and touching his hat, said:

"Excuse the liberty, sir, but as I rode this 'oss over from Hebworth this morning, and pretty fast too, he has already had a very stiff day's work, and I am much afraid I shall do him a damage if I keep him at this pace any longer. It's a good 'oss, sir, a reglar good 'oss, there's no

denyin' it, but he can't do it, sir; he ain't got the wind for it nor legs neither."

"Ah, that's true," said Egerton, "I'm in such a hurry to get home, that I did not think much about the horses. Well, there's no necessity for your keeping up with me. You can follow slowly at your leisure, and stop at Hilderton if you think proper."

John touched his hat and dropped behind, but in another moment he was again at his young master's side.

"If I might make so bold, sir, the mare's a'most as blown as this un. Master's very fond of the bay mare, sir, but I heard at Parson Campbell's that she'd been out a couple of hours this mornin', besides a good bit yesterday, and she didn't start quite fresh like. I know she can't stand that pace much longer."

"Perhaps you are right, John; I will take it a little more easily."

John pulled up his horse into a walk, and Egerton rode on, but not quite so fast as before. He might have proceeded about five miles farther

when the mare suddenly fell dead lame. He got off and examined her feet, but could not find any stone in them; he accordingly threw the bridle over his arm, and walked on to Hilderton, which was only about four miles further. He arrived there between ten and eleven o'clock, put up his horse at the little inn, and asked if he could have a saddle horse directly.

"Extremely sorry, Mr. Egerton, but really both our saddle-horses are out to-night. I could get a pair of posters from the Wine and Walnuts, but it will be pretty well half an hour first, at this time of the evening."

"No, thank you," said Egerton. "It is but five miles further, and I should not save any time by it. I shall walk the rest of the way, and send a man over about the mare to-morrow."

It was a fine moonlight night, and the stillness of the hour and loneliness of the road enabled him to reflect without interruption on the events of the few preceding hours. The hurried message, that the father whom he had

deemed in perfect health was now lying on the bed of death, had shocked him deeply, but the first effect had been a little weakened by the necessity of immediate action. Now, however, the sad reality presented itself in its full force, and he began to feel that his father had been more to him than he had suspected. He passed in review, all the various little passages in their intercourse, that he could remember from his childhood down to the present moment, and found in doing so a melancholy pleasure, though one not unmingled with tender regrets. His own character had too many points of resemblance with that of his father not to bring them into frequent collision. It is true, Sir Roderick could never complain of the least want of respect on the part of his son, but then he could not induce him to give up his opinions without first going through the sometimes difficult operation of convincing him of their erroneousness. The subject in which both took a very deep, if not the deepest interest, was that of politics; and here their views were diametrically opposed.

The old Baronet was a high Tory, and attached great importance to birth; whereas his son Henry was a Radical, and regarded birth as the least important element in the estimation of a man's worth. While, however, this independence of thought on the part of Egerton had occasionally irritated Sir Roderick, it had also inspired him with a certain involuntary respect for his son's intellect and strength of character.

As long as they had been together, these little conflicts of opinion and the arguments that had resulted from them, though they never reached any serious height, appeared to form a rather large element in their mutual relations. Now however, that it seemed only too probable that they were soon to part, Egerton felt for the first time, how powerfully and beneficially all the nobler and higher parts of his father's character had influenced his own. He felt, indeed, that he had not always done his father full justice, and that widely as their opinions had diverged on many subjects, there had been a deep underlying basis of sympathy which he now regretted

not to have cultivated more largely. In reality the fault had been less on his side than on that of his father, who resembled Mr. Campbell in his great impatience at anything like opposition to his wishes.

In the midst of these reflections, Bertha's image would continually obtrude itself upon his mind in spite of himself, and the bright light which the certainty of her love had thrown around his future path, made his heart beat with a new and strange joy. But ever and anon he repelled these visions of happiness as disloyalty to his dying father, whom perhaps he might never see again; and when it occurred to him that even in the very moment in which Bertha had confessed the secret of her heart, that grey head might have been stricken by the sure though unseen hand of death, or the fevered lips might have been calling wildly but vainly for the absent son, he felt as if he had been guilty of some great sin. Egerton's mind, however, was not such as to indulge long in morbid and unavailing self-reproaches, and he soon dispelled

them with the recollection that he had had no reason to anticipate his father's illness. All that he could do now, he would; and no thoughts or feelings connected with his own happiness should be allowed to divert his mind to any other object than that of soothing his father's last moments, for such he feared they would prove to be.

The letter he had received from Mr. Nixon, his father's secretary, had been somewhat vague. Perhaps, after all, the account might have been greatly exaggerated, and he might still hope to see his father restored to his former health and strength. Perhaps he might still present his blushing bride at Hebworth, and gladden the old man's declining days with the sight of his son's happiness. But then the unwelcome fact of his father's aristocratic pride, contempt of parvenues, and bigoted toryism would force itself upon his mind, and he could not deny that his engagement might be regarded by Sir Roderick in a far different light to that in which it appeared to himself. Any very determined opposition, however, he did not anticipate, and he felt con-

vinced that at all events the sight of Bertha must disarm it in a moment.

As he passed a well-known turn in the road, the grey and aged walls of Hebworth, lighted up by the beams of the harvest-moon, came full upon his view. That part of the building which was occupied by his father was concealed by the dense shade of some venerable elms, which looked hardly less ancient than the Abbey itself. He hastened his steps, and in a quarter of an hour reached the principal entrance. The carriage that had brought from the station Sir John Twaddlecome, the eminent London physician, who had just complied with a telegraphic summons, was standing in the large court, flanked by two gigs, the one being the property of Mr. Seton, the surgeon-apothecary of Hilderton, and medical attendant at the Abbey in ordinary; the other that of Mr. Leechwell, the apothecary of Diddleton, and surgeon to the Poor Law Union. Mr. Nixon had called in the latter gentleman from the accidental circumstance of his having been in the immediate neighbour-

hood at the time of Sir Roderick's sudden attack, but he had also sent for Mr. Seton, as being the established medical adviser of the family.

Egerton hurried through the cloisters and entered the house. He met Mr. Nixon in the hall, who informed him that his father had enquired for him repeatedly, but that he was asleep at that moment, and could see nobody, as it was highly important that he should not be disturbed. He then proceeded to the library, and having learnt from Sir John that the danger was not immediate, retired to his room to change his dress, and left the doctors to their consultation.

Doctors do sometimes disagree, and such was the case in the present instance, for Messrs. Seton and Leechwell entered immediately upon a scientific discussion, the former smiling blandly, the latter grimly, both extremely anxious to do full justice to the other's views, but at the same time perfectly convinced that said views were decidedly erroneous. Sir John Twaddlecome listened to each alternately with the most im-

partial distribution of his condescension and affability. As the reader probably takes no interest in the precise question at issue, we will merely mention, for the benefit of any medical gentleman who may peruse these pages, that while both Mr. Seton and Mr. Leechwell were quite agreed that the principal elements in the prescription should be *quag* and *drag*, Mr. Seton thought there should be twice as much *quag* as *drag*, whereas, Mr. Leechwell contended there should be at least three times as much *drag* as *quag*. Mr. Seton observed that knowing Sir Roderick's constitution from long experience (here he looked very hard at Mr. Leechwell) he could assert with confidence that if his opinions were not adopted the patient's life was not worth six hours' purchase. Mr. Leechwell replied that if *drag* were not administered in large doses, a responsibility would rest somewhere which he shuddered to contemplate. Mr. Seton observed that he had telegraphed for Sir John because he knew that the collective experience of the whole college would not be as valuable as Sir John's

opinion in such a case as the present, and that he hoped Sir John would support his view as to the propriety of exhibiting *quag* very largely. At the allusion to the telegraph, Leechwell lifted his hands in token of his extreme surprise, but the gesture and its signification were entirely ignored by Mr. Seton. Mr. Leechwell replied that he had most urgently requested Mr. Seton to telegraph for Sir John Twaddlecome, because he, Mr. Leechwell, had felt convinced that there was no man living who had effected more miraculous cures in similar cases by the copious exhibition of *drag*, accompanied by unlimited bleeding, than that great physician.

Sir John here pulled out his snuffbox, and having offered a pinch to each gentleman alternately, observed with that expression of wisdom on his countenance which excites such confidence in his opinion through all Belgravia, that while there was a great deal of truth in the views of his friend Seton, he could not shut his eyes to the wonderful profundity which pervaded the remarks of his friend Leechwell. If, however,

he might be allowed to make the suggestion, he should rather lean to the opinion that a somewhat different treatment to that proposed by either gentleman might be adopted with advantage. The patient's state was such as not to afford much hope, but if anything could save him, it was a medicine which he, Sir John, then had in his pocket.

Sir John here produced a small case, and having opened it, selected one of a number of very small and apparently empty bottles. He then took out the cork and shook the bottle gently over the palm of his hand, but nothing was seen to come out.

"There, gentlemen," said Sir John, extending his apparently empty hand with a look of calm self-satisfaction, "there, gentlemen, is the medicine which I should recommend."

Mr. Seton and Mr. Leechwell immediately put their heads forward with the imminent risk of a collision. They looked very hard at Sir John's hand, but could see nothing in it whatever.

"Look again," said Sir John.

Each gentleman took out his spectacles, and having carefully wiped the glasses, again examined Sir John's palm with increased eagerness. Mr. Leechwell could still see nothing.

"I think, Sir John," said Mr. Seton, "I think I can distinguish a small white speck."

"Exactly so," said Sir John, smiling more blandly than ever, "it is the five-millionth part of a grain of aconite."

Both the doctors withdrew their heads. Sir John looked at each alternately with the greatest benignity. They first gazed at Sir John in mute astonishment, and then at each other. A light had burst in upon them. *Sir John had become a homœopath.*

Such indeed was actually the case. Believing that a large portion of Belgravia was sufficiently enlightened to receive the new philosophical discovery that an infinitessimal quantity of poison would produce quite as beneficial an effect on the physical system as a bread pill, and a greater effect on the imagination, Sir John had nobly

sacrificed his prejudices without much detriment to his patients or any to his practice.

A great discovery produces different effects upon different temperaments, and so it proved in the present instance. Mr. Leechwell's countenance grew blacker and blacker, Mr. Seton's more beaming than ever. Mr. Leechwell seized his hat, pressed it with unwonted energy on his head, and turning his back to the other gentlemen stalked out of the room without saying a word.

"I am sure, my dear Sir John," said Mr. Seton, "that you will excuse any little apparent rudeness in my friend Leechwell. He is a very excellent man no doubt, and his coarser treatment may be very suitable for the paupers of the Hilderton Union. But such a person can hardly be a judge of the more delicate treatment that is required by the finer physique of aristocratic constitutions. For this it is necessary that the practitioner should himself partake of the advantages of blood. You may not perhaps be aware of it, Sir John, but my family is descended

from one of the suite of that great Scotch monarch, Macbeth, a little circumstance that has been immortalized by our divine dramatist. I have long felt an intense interest in homæopathy, and shall be glad to learn anything respecting it from so able a master.

Sir John answered this address with a slight inclination of the head and a smile more radiant than ever, and then proceeded to the patient's apartment with his palm extended as before, and the five millionth of a grain of aconite reposing gently on the line of life. The professional reader will find Sir John's reason for this treatment in his large work on *Immateria Medica*, vol. x. p. 437.

Sir John had hardly left the library when Egerton re-entered it. Mr. Nixon appeared immediately afterwards and reported that Sir Roderick was now awake, and had again inquired for his son.

On entering the sick room Egerton was most painfully struck with the change that had taken place in his father's appearance since he had last

seen him. The old man was sitting up in the middle of the bed supported by numerous pillows, and though the finely formed features and scanty gray hairs would have been sufficient marks of his identity, there was a contraction of the brows, a dull heavy look about the eyes, and a slight contortion of the mouth which presented a strong contrast to his usual expression. He turned his eyes towards Egerton but without moving his head, and feebly stretched out his hand. Egerton took it and sat down by the side of the bed.

"Oh, I am glad you have come, I was afraid you might be too late."

"I came the instant I heard you were ill, sir, but I hope and trust it may not prove so serious as you seem to think."

"I don't know, Henry, what they have been telling you about me, but there is one thing I know as well as any doctor of them all, and that is, that my hours are numbered. Don't let them humbug you on that point, my boy.

There's no good in blinking the matter. I'm going, and that fast."

"We are all in God's hands. You may be right, but I must still hope that you will get over this attack; at any rate I feel sure that Sir John does not think the danger immediate."

"What does Sir John know about it," said Sir Roderick angrily. "I tell you, you see before you a dying man, and that I shall not live eight and forty hours, and I know that as well and better than all the Sir Johns in the world. What does Seton say?"

"Seton does not seem to think so badly—"

"Parcel of blockheads," interrupted Sir Roderick. "Well, well, it does not signify. They will soon see who's right. I shall give them the slip and prove them wrong; that's one comfort."

Egerton seeing his father's excitement, tried to turn the conversation by asking if he would like to see a clergyman.

"No, no, thank you, Henry; at any rate not to night. I have the same views now I always

had on those subjects, and can find in my own thoughts, and through my own prayers, all the faith in my Creator and in my Saviour that I can find anywhere. Prosy old Dr. Saltwell would only tease me, and without meaning it, remind me of our frequent arguments on the poor-laws and corn-laws. Not but what he is a good old soul. No, no, I have always known I must die at some time, and am not altogether unprepared. But we must not forget the living for the dying. How are you, Henry? I think you look rather pale."

"Thank you, sir, I am perfectly well."

"By the way, I wish I could have seen William. It will be a sad blow to him, though we shan't be long separated. Poor fellow! Poor fellow! I sent you Robertson's last letter about him. It seems that he entertains but very little hope. William writes despondingly himself. He little thought I should go before him. I'm sure I didn't. He has been a good son, Henry, and so have you. God bless you both. God bless you!"

Egerton was deeply moved, and turned away his head to hide the feelings he could no longer quite control.

"Never whimper, boy; the old must make way for the young, sooner or later, you know. That reminds me, Henry, I had always intended Chesham Wood farm for you, and I wanted to speak to Patterson about a codicil, but I think now it is hardly worth while to take any trouble in the matter. After that last letter from Robertson, it is quite clear that it will make no difference to you a year hence. Ah, poor William! He will never visit Hebworth as its master, I'm afraid. I wished you to know why I have done nothing for you. When Will is gone it will be all yours, you know. And now good night. You must go to bed, Henry, or you will be getting ill too. Good night."

Egerton was really very much tired by the fatigue and excitement of the day, and at the advice of Sir John went to bed, though not in the expectation of enjoying much sleep. He previously, however, obtained a promise from

Mr. Nixon that he should be called the instant any unfavourable change should occur in the symptoms.

Mr. Nixon, Mr. Seton, and Mrs. Oldworthy, the housekeeper, sat up through the night, and Sir John went to bed. Egerton obtained a few hours' sleep towards the morning, and as soon as he was dressed, hurried to his father's room. Sir Roderick had had a rather restless night, and had spoken repeatedly of William, whose absence seemed to prey upon his mind.

"Good morning, sir," said Egerton, on entering. "I hope you feel better this morning."

"Good morning, Henry. As to better or worse, it makes no difference. I shan't trouble any of you long. Dear me, I forgot yesterday to ask you where you have been. Oh, now I know; reading at Stoneleigh—Stoneleigh, no, that's not it; Stonecombe, with Mr. Edward Campbell. I hope you read hard, Henry; read hard, not too hard though; take care of your health, you know. How is Mr. Campbell—Mr. Campbell, of Oakwood, I mean?"

"I left him quite well, sir."

"John Campbell, good fellow at Cambridge, but obstinate—very obstinate. Used to give himself airs rather. No family; father a Glasgow tradesman, or something low. Wanted to have your mother, you know, but Lady Fanny liked your father better. Never quite forgave me. Had something I wanted to say to you about the Campbells. What was it? What was it? Something Nixon told me. Is Nixon there?"

Mr. Nixon was immediately summoned from the next room.

"What was it, Nixon, about Campbell and Henry, you know? You told me something."

Mr. Nixon had no idea to what Sir Roderick alluded.

"But you did, Nixon, you know you did," said the old man much irritated; "you told me —let me see—let me see. When you were speaking about the Chesham Wood farm—oh! dear, I shall forget it, and I wanted so much —now I have it. Highlow—yes, Highlow. It was not you, Nixon. Never mind, I was not

angry. My memory is not so strong, you know, as it used to be. Yes, yes," said Sir Roderick, turning himself in his bed with some difficulty, and looking Egerton in the face, "I heard that you were often at Oakwood, sir, and that you loved that old Radical's daughter, that you—that you—but tell me, Henry—tell me it was a calumny—you don't—no, no—you don't—I am sure you don't!"

Egerton was silent.

"Speak, Henry, for Heaven's sake, speak. You don't mean that you ever thought of disgracing your family, and mixing the blood of the Egertons with that of a Glasgow tradesman."

"I had intended, sir, to take an early opportunity of speaking to you about Miss Cam—"

"So it's true—it's true!" exclaimed the old man, sinking back again. Then raising himself in his bed with still greater difficulty than before, he continued, "Now hear me, Henry, hear me. I have felt some pride in the recollection that no base blood flows in our veins. Walk through the gallery, Henry, and you will

not find a single blot on our escutcheon. I say there's not an ancestress of yours among all those pictures you need be ashamed of. Not one, I say, not one. And now you won't tell me, lying here on my deathbed, you won't tell me that your children are to be the grandchildren or great grandchildren of a man that had a firm in Glasgow, and bought and sold, and haggled and cheated, and—and—oh, God! my head—and went on 'Change! I—I never will consent, I never will! Don't ask me—don't ask me, Henry; for God's sake, don't ask me."

"Did you love my mother, sir?" said Egerton in a low voice, that contrasted strangely with his father's violence.

"I love your mother! Why, of course I did, but then she was a Selwyn—fine old family! She was the youngest daughter of the eighth Earl of Dimsdale. There was blood there—blood there!"

"Did you then love her, sir, because her name was Selwyn, and her father the Earl of Dimsdale, or did you love her for herself, because she

was a gentle, loving woman, kind, unselfish, patient, forgiving, and beautiful as few others? I loved my mother, sir, Heaven knows how dearly. I was young when she died, but I can fancy what she must have been to the husband of her choice. You loved her surely for herself, did you not?"

"Of course, of course," said the old Baronet, somewhat moved at the recollection of his wife, but angry with himself for letting his son see it.

"Well then," continued Egerton, "supposing instead of being a Selwyn, she had been of less ancient blood, would you on that account have shut your heart to one so fair, so gentle, so true? Would you have robbed yourself and her of a happiness such as a deep affection alone can give, for a mere question of quarterings? Would you make the best part of life, the most godlike part of our nature, to depend on the forms and conventionalities of the Herald's Office? I assure you on my honour, sir, I never will marry any but one I deem a noble woman, but the nobility I

look for is one not based on a paltry patent of parchment made by man, but on a large noble soul,—a patent of God's creation."

"Nay," replied the old man, "if you come to me with your leveling radical notions, notions that have brought about all manner of evil, and will one day be the ruin of this country, I neither can nor will argue with you. I have no sympathy with such absurdities. But look here, Henry, I am your father, and claim your obedience as my right. I won't hear another word," he continued, seeing Egerton about to speak. "I won't hear one word more. I command you never to marry daughter of John Campbell. Never, never, shall the master of Hebworth be the descendant of a Glasgow pedlar! Do you hear? Do you hear?"

"Really, sir, you said you loved my mother. I say I love Miss Campbell."

"And I say she was a Selwyn!" shrieked out the old man. "She was a Selwyn! gracious God! Henry, you'll drive me mad! I can't bear it. If you ever marry the danghter of that old

radical, then my curse boy, yes my curse,—do you understand what a father's curse is? My curse—"

"Stop, father, stop! For Heaven's sake let us not part so, if part we must!"

But Sir Roderick hardly heard Egerton's adjuration. He had fallen back in a state of complete exhaustion, and was evidently unable to articulate another word. Nixon went to call Sir John, who was on the point of starting for London. Having heard that Sir Roderick had had a very angry conversation with his son, he ordered Egerton not to enter the sick room during the day, unless his father expressed a decided wish to see him. Quiet, he said, was absolutely necessary for the patient, and the repetition of such an exciting scene might be attended with the most serious consequences. Sir John then gave Mr. Seton his final directions, and having promised to return that evening, stepped into his carriage and drove away.

Egerton left the room in a state of mind bordering on distraction. He had gathered from

some expressions which Sir John had dropped that morning, that the prospect of his father's recovery was extremely small, and the thought that he was positively excluded from the sick chamber, lest the sight of him should be too painful,—that he was not only going to lose his father, but that that father's last words should be words of wild ungovernable anger,—was so unspeakably bitter, that he felt his heart quite crushed within him. Not for one moment, however, did he swerve from his faith to the innocent occasion of all this misery. Had his father urged a single argument against his attachment which appealed to his sober reason, or with which he could have felt even the slightest sympathy, the case might have been otherwise, and he might at least have been willing to give the question further consideration. But when his obedience to the parental authority was demanded in a question involving the happiness of another as well as himself, and this demand was supported on grounds which his innermost convictions told him were unworthy

and narrow prejudices, his whole nature revolted against such tyranny, and he felt that he would be false to his own honour, false to the respect he owed to himself, if he sacrificed the liberty which is the right of every responsible agent, to the wishes or whim of any human being, even of his own father. His conscience therefore quite acquitted him in the course which he was determined to take, but the painfulness of his position at such a moment was but partially alleviated by the conviction which involved his father's wrong. He was rejoiced to learn from Mr. Nixon that Sir Roderick appeared to have recovered from the immediate ill effects of the conversation above recounted, and to have resumed his former composure. But hour after hour elapsed and no message summoned him to the post he had deserted so unwillingly. It was a day of bitter unavailing grief. The precious minutes were passing away, and he knew that the possibility of a reconciliation was passing rapidly with them; and yet he saw no help,—not a single ray of light. It did indeed occur to him that perhaps

Sir John's mediation might be employed to bring about a favorable change in his father's feelings, but the hope was a very weak one, and he clung to it only because all other resources failed him.

Many a time during that day, did Sir Roderick's eyes turn towards the door, but always to be disappointed. He knew his hours were drawing to a close, and that the son who had been his chief pride, was only separated from him by a few yards, but he could not overcome his feeling of resentment sufficiently to send for him. It would have been no slight relief could he have known that Egerton's absence was not his own act, but was only in compliance with Sir John's strict injunctions. This comfort, however, was denied him.

At length the evening arrived, and the wheels of Sir John's carriage were heard approaching the house. Sir Roderick's ear caught the sound long before it was heard by Nixon, and he displayed considerable excitement and anxiety. As soon as Sir John entered the room, Sir Roderick

ordered everybody else to leave it, and the physician was left alone with his patient.

About ten minutes later Sir John entered the library in which Egerton was sitting, and told him his father wished to see him. "Sir Roderick," he added, "has explained to me the nature of your little *contretemps* of this morning. He is most anxious you should part from him as a son should part from a dying father. Let me entreat you therefore to exercise great control over your feelings during this interview, and to humour him in his last request."

"I shall do, Sir John, whatever lies in my power, consistently with my honour, to render my father's last moments peaceful and happy. More I cannot promise."

"Now, my dear Mr. Egerton, let me speak to you as one man of the world *should* speak to another. Mental excitement is highly prejudicial in your father's malady. He is determined to see you, and indeed it would not be right or advisable that you should absent yourself any longer from his room. But if you do not

humour him, and let him have his own way, I cannot really answer for the consequences."

"But what would you have me do and say, Sir John?"

"Well, if I understand the matter rightly, he wants you to promise not to marry a certain lady. Now my dear sir, considering that he is on his death bed, and cannot last long, let me beg of you to give him this promise, and thus soothe his last moments as a good son should do."

"But my dear Sir John, it is absolutely impossible for me to allow this unreasonable prejudice of my father's to influence me in one of the most important actions of my life."

"I did not say that exactly. I am speaking to you as to a man that has mixed in the world, and is above allowing himself to be influenced by scruples which have no weight with reasonable men. When poor dear Sir Roderick has left us, he will no longer be pained by any step you may think proper to take, for he will know nothing about it, or if he should, he will look at these things in another light."

"Then, Sir John, I understand your advice to be that I should give the required promise with the intention of not keeping it."

"My dear sir, my dear sir," said Sir John, smiling, "you put the thing in an unnecessarily harsh form. But if you make the promise now, you know, it is impossible for you to foresee whether circumstances may not arise at some future time, which may make your diverging slightly from its strict terms an imperative duty. I speak to you, as I said before, as a man of the world, who takes too large views to allow himself to be shackled by any Quixotic and exaggerated ideas of moral obligation, under circumstances so very peculiar as the present."

"My views on these subjects," replied Egerton, "are entirely opposed to your own, Sir John, so that it is out of my power to take your advice." Saying these words he left the room.

On entering the sick chamber, Egerton approached his father's bed and clasped his hand between his own.

"Henry," said Sir Roderick in a far gentler tone than he had used before, "I may, perhaps have been rather hasty this morning, but I felt deeply because I considered the honour of our family to be involved. I may live through this night, but I believe I am sinking fast, and that this is our last meeting. I hope that you have employed this day in thinking over what I said, and are not determined to make my last moments miserable, by persisting in an obstinate disobedience to my dying wishes. Promise me, Henry, that you will give up all thoughts of marrying Miss Campbell."

Egerton's tears fell fast and thick over the old man's hand. He could not speak at first, but his deep emotion softened his father's heart towards him—the more so as it made him think that his appeal had not been in vain.

"Thank you, Henry," he continued, "I can appreciate the sacrifice you are making to your duty. God bless you for it. I shall now die happy."

"Forgive me, sir, but you have misinterpreted

my silence. I cannot give the promise you require. I love you dearly, father; God alone knows how deeply I have felt, and do feel, all your kindness to me from my childhood; but I cannot make this promise, because I should not intend to keep it. You do not know Miss Campbell, and therefore you are not aware of the greatness of the sacrifice you ask me to make. The obedience you demand of me would affect my happiness, and probably my usefulness through life; and even were I willing to sacrifice my own feelings to yours, I believe that I should not be justified in surrendering my future liberty in so important a point. Besides, my love for Miss Campbell, is bound up with all that is highest and noblest in my nature. If you knew her, father, you would rejoice that I had gained so great a treasure as her affection, and would never ask me to renounce it. Oh, father, father! God looks upon our hearts and not upon our coats of arms. Should he see fit to take you to himself, can you believe that you will then regard these petty worldly distinctions, with the same eyes

that you do now? I *cannot* make this promise, father, but that you may see how anxious I am to consult your wishes to the utmost of my power, I solemnly declare that I will not see Miss Campbell for six months from this time. The sacrifice is no slight one, I assure you; do not embitter our last parting by asking more than I can give."

Sir Roderick withdrew his hand violently from Egerton's, and made no answer; his bosom heaved, and he seemed almost suffocated with the excess of his passion. At last he groaned out with frequent interruptions, and in a hoarse voice:

"Then you refuse my last request, I—I adjured you—as a dying man—and—and—as a father—and—and—oh, my head, my head—I renounce you—renounce you, sir—before, I could not get it out, but—but my dying curse light on your disobedient head!"

Egerton rushed out of the room. His last hopes of a reconciliation were gone; hurrying past Sir John, Mr. Nixon, and the attendants

who were waiting outside, he ran up stairs to his room, bolted the door, and throwing himself on his bed, cried like a child.

When Sir John returned to his patient's room, he found him in a state of great excitement.

"Give me a pen and paper," cried Sir Roderick, "give me paper—quick—quick—pen—quick."

"My dear Sir Roderick, pray compose yourself; now pray do, my dear sir."

"Give me paper—give me paper—quick—quick."

"This excitement, my dear sir, is highly preju—"

"Quick, quick," said Sir Roderick, "paper, paper."

Seeing that nothing was likely to be gained by opposing his wishes, Sir John ordered writing materials to be brought.

"What shall I write for you, Sir Roderick? If you will dictate any little directions you may still wish to give, I will—or perhaps Mr. Nixon would be the more proper person."

"No, no—here—another pillow, so, so—that will do."

Sir Roderick took the pen and began to write a few straggling characters, which, however, were just legible, and to the following effect:

"Sir Roderick Egerton presents his compliments to Mr. Campbell, and begs to inform him that no consideration shall ever induce him to consent to the marriage of his son with any daughter—"

But here the old man's passion overpowered him, and he sank back quite exhausted. Sir John perceived that he had had another stroke, and in spite of his homœopathy, directed Mr. Seton to bleed him immediately.

Sir Roderick continued in a state of torpor all that night and the greater part of the next day. Towards the evening he began to rally a little and was able to recognize the persons about him.

Egerton passed the whole day in the adjoining room, but was afraid of seeing his father again lest his presence might produce another relapse.

Sir Roderick's utterance had become extremely indistinct, and his attendants had the greatest difficulty in understanding his wishes. Just as the last rays of the sun were lighting up the rich hangings of the sick man's couch, and throwing an almost unearthly light upon his pale and deathlike features, he beckoned to Mr Nixon to approach him.

"Nixon, bring—bring Henry!" gasped the dying man.

Mr. Nixon hurried to the adjoining room, and in another moment Egerton was kneeling by his father's bedside.

Sir Roderick smiled faintly, and laid his hand on his son's head.

"Not curse—not curse, Henry—father's blessing. God have mercy on my soul! God bless William and you too, my boy! God bless both!"

A change came over the old man's face. The head fell back, the jaw dropped, the eye became fixed—the spirit had returned to the God that gave it.

CHAPTER II.

THE suddenness of Sir Roderick's death would have rendered the blow peculiarly severe to an affectionate son under any circumstances, but the poignancy of Egerton's grief was very much increased by the painful scenes of the last two days. At the very moment in which he had most earnestly wished to do all in his power to soothe his father's feelings and alleviate his sufferings, he had found himself engaged in a violent conflict, and one of such a character as to render any further concession quite impossible.

To have given the promise demanded by Sir Roderick with the intention of keeping it, would have been equivalent to merging his own individuality in that of his father, and that in a point directly opposed to his own judgment. To have given it without such intention, would have been a deliberate fraud of which he was utterly incapable.

In the midst of all this bitterness he found considerable relief in the recollection that his father's last feeling had been an earnest desire for a reconciliation, and that he had most unequivocally recalled the curse in order to pronounce a blessing in its stead. He also derived a somewhat painful satisfaction from the belief that much of his father's violence was to be attributed to physical causes. An overbearing temper had always been the principal fault in Sir Roderick's character, but he had generally succeeded in keeping it within a certain degree of control. This had been far less the case within the last few years of his life, and Egerton was convinced that the progress of latent disease

had greatly increased that constitutional irritability which had so strongly manifested itself in the scenes recorded in the last chapter.

These reflections were undoubtedly a source of some consolation; the more so, perhaps, as his conscience fully acquitted him of any unreasonable opposition to his father's wishes. Still, however, look at the question in whatever light he would, it was impossible to ignore the fact, that his father's last command was one which he had refused to obey, and that his refusal had probably accelerated the melancholy termination of his father's illness.

Funereal pomp had never been much to Egerton's taste, but he knew that Sir Roderick had regarded it with other feelings, and he accordingly gave orders for the last rites to be performed with all that splendour and outward circumstance which are supposed to evince respect for the dead. He also wrote to Mr. Edward Campbell to inform him of the sad event, and begged him to communicate it to the family at Oakwood. To Herbert he enclosed

only a few hasty lines, promising to write more at length in a short time.

For the first few days after his father's death, the greater part of Egerton's time was engrossed by the business, which in the absence of his brother, now devolved upon himself. As soon however as the funeral was over, and he had begun to enjoy some occasional respite from the interminable consultations with Mr. Nixon, his thoughts returned to Stonecombe and its inhabitants with redoubled force. How gladly would he have sought consolation under his heavy affliction in the society of those dear friends, and more than all, in the sympathy of the woman he loved, had not his promise rendered it impossible!

For a moment indeed it appeared to him questionable, whether that promise could be considered as binding. Had not the relation in which he stood to Bertha rendered even a partial sacrifice of her happiness to his father's prejudices an unjustifiable act? Besides, he had made the promise in the expectation at least, if

not indeed on the tacit understanding, that it would lead to some concession on his father's side. But so far from its having this result, that father had never even expressed his acceptance of it—on the contrary, he had answered it with the most terrible denunciation of wrath which it was in the power of words to convey.

Egerton's sense of honour, however, was far too strong to allow of his being deluded by flimsy sophisms. If his promise had not been such as his calmer judgment would have entirely sanctioned, it certainly involved no amount of criminality sufficient to make it invalid on that account alone. And even if his father had not accepted it instantly, or indeed at any time in express words, his final withdrawal of the curse might at least be regarded as a tacit acknowledgment of his son's sacrifice. No—there could not be a shadow of a doubt, that the promise was strictly binding, and that he must renounce the society of Miss Campbell for the full space of six long weary months, what-

ever might be the cost either to her or to himself.

This point once settled, his next difficulty was to determine the proper course of conduct to pursue towards Bertha, during the term of his probation. To absent himself from Stonecombe for six months without offering any explanation, was out of the question. Besides the pain which such a long wearing period of suspense must inevitably occasion her, would she not be justified in doubting the earnestness of his attachment, if he appeared to set so little value on the society of its object? Could he have written to her indeed, he might still have been able to keep alive her faith in his constancy in spite of all unfavorable appearances, but a correspondence was impossible without an engagement.

For an instant the question suggested itself, whether he should not write to Mr. Campbell, and formally declare himself a suitor for his daughter's hand. But such a host of objections immediately occurred to him, that he

gave up the idea almost as soon as it was formed. Not only would such an act have been in direct disobedience to his father's dying commands, but it would have involved a breach of the spirit of his promise if not of its letter. It was not that he for a moment contemplated making concessions to his father's memory, which he refused to make to himself while living. Upon a calmer review of the whole question, he felt quite satisfied of his perfect right to follow eventually the dictates of his own judgment. But to exercise that right within any very short period after his father's death, would have shocked him as an act of disrespect. An immediate engagement, moreover, would have involved the necessity of his returning to Stonecombe, or of alleging some reason for his absence; and the only explanation he could offer, was of such a nature, that it would entirely destroy all chance of his obtaining Mr. Campbell's consent.

If Egerton had had to consider Bertha's feelings alone, he would have at once communicated

to her the promise he had made his father, and trusted to the strength of her character, as well as of her love for himself. The knowledge of Sir Roderick's opposition to their union would of course have been very painful to her, but hardly so much so as anything that might seem to place Egerton's attachment in an equivocal light. But Egerton felt that though the most rigid idea of duty could never make it incumbent on himself to inform Mr. Campbell of Sir Roderick's sentiments, with Bertha it would be otherwise, as she could not conscientiously ask her father's sanction to an attachment, while suppressing a circumstance, the knowledge of which would infallibly insure her father's refusal.

After long and anxious deliberation on all the difficulties of his position, Egerton at length determined on writing to Herbert. It was no easy task to avoid saying either too little or too much, and he tore up several sheets before he was satisfied. At length he despatched the following letter:

"Hebworth Abbey,
"Aug. 29, 184—.

"My Dear Herbert,

"I received your kind letter on the day befc the funeral, and the next post brought me o from your father, full of that affectionate sy pathy and consolation, which no one is capable of affording as himself. The lat contained a very kind message from Mr. Cam bell. Give him my best thanks, Herbert, a accept the same for yourself and your fath who will, I hope, excuse me if I do not write him again immediately.

"How gladly should I avail myself of yo invitation to return to Stonecombe, if it were my power. There is no other place which co tains friends so dear to me, and the last fe hours I spent there were the happiest in n life. I think you must have guessed my secre At any rate it need be one no longer to yo although I must beg you not to allude to it present either to your father or to Mr. Campbe Yes, Herbert, I love your cousin Bertha with n

whole soul; aye, as passionately as man ever loved woman. I should have given you my confidence before I left, had not your near relationship made me feel reluctant to do so, until I had learnt my fate from herself. That last day at Stonecombe was indeed an eventful one. In the morning I had been making myself utterly miserable, but a few words from Mary at luncheon (God bless her for them!) threw quite a new light upon the matter, and—you can guess the rest. The happiness of the afternoon, however, was too great to last, and the evening saw me on the road to Hebworth, to close my poor father's eyes.

"Perhaps you may think me unfeeling in touching on the subject of my own happiness immediately after my bereavement, but I wished you to know that if I did not accept your very pressing invitation it is not from the want of will. In the absence of my brother a great deal of business has devolved upon myself, and I shall not be able to leave Hebworth at present. Would that that were the only impediment! But, alas!

there are circumstances connected with my father's death which render it advisable for me to go abroad the instant my presence can be dispensed with here. Painful as it will be to me to leave England without seeing Bertha again, I shall not be able to go to Stonecombe even for a single day.

"And now, Herbert, I have a particular favour to ask of you. I cannot help fearing lest Bertha may misinterpret my actions. Had I been able to write to her, I should have felt less anxious, as I could then have assured her of the depth and earnestness of my love, in language which would have ensured conviction. But as I am not engaged to her, I could not do this without entering into formal explanations with Mr. Campbell, and this is of course impossible till a considerable time has elapsed after my father's death. Now should you ever have reason to think that my prolonged absence is subjecting her faith in me to too severe a trial, will you plead my cause with her, and assure her of the constancy of my attachment? You

may do this conscientiously; for I give you my honour that nothing will keep me from Oakwood one day longer than I can help, and that the instant it is in my power I shall hasten to lay my suit before Mr. Campbell.

"I hope you will write to me very often, and not be niggardly in your information on the *most interesting* topics. I will send you a sketch of my route, before I leave, with the dates. I intend going to Italy by the Rhine, and through Switzerland, and shall join my brother in Naples. And now I must conclude this long epistle with kind remembrances, &c., &c., to all at Stonecombe, yourself included. Write soon, and believe me ever

"Yours very sincerely,

"HENRY EGERTON.

"P.S. I am sorry to be obliged to give up Cambridge, at least for the present; but it cannot be helped."

Egerton had proposed joining his brother at Naples, in the course of October. Not

conceiving it possible that Sir William would have any objection to the plan, he had simply written to mention the time at which he would probably arrive, but did not consider it necessary to wait for an answer. He accordingly started on his journey about ten days after having despatched his letter, and proceeded in the first instance to Cologne.

After having admired the cathedral, paid his respects to the bones of the eleven thousand virgins, laid in a sufficient supply of wicker-cased bottles of the genuine Maria Farina, vented a few mild execrations at the narrowness of the streets and the juvenile male population who waylay wretched travellers with their proposals to shew them all the beauties of the town for the consideration of ten silver groschen. he returned to his hotel and made the necessary preparations for continuing his journey the following day. He did not expect to receive any letters so soon, but as a measure of precaution sent a commissioner to the post office to make the usual inquiries. The man soon returned and

placed the following document in Egerton's hands.

"Naples, Sept., 184—.

"MY DEAR HENRY,

"I have just received yours of the 2nd inst. Your proposal to join me at Naples is truly kind. I cannot tell you with what a longing I look forward to our speedy meeting. It is nearly three years since we have seen each other, and so much has taken place in this time that I think we shall be able to talk for a week without cessation. I have had much to try me that you do not know of, and often thank God that though we have lived lately so far apart, our hearts have never been separated, and that I can count on your affection and sympathy in whatever concerns me nearly. This feeling has been greatly strengthened since our poor father's sudden death. Except Robertson, there is no one here who knew him, and he saw him only a few times. It will be a great relief to me to be with those who share my grief, and to whom I can speak openly of that as well as other subjects

that interest me personally. I envy you the satisfaction of having been at Hebworth, and having soothed our dear father's last hours, and received his last wishes. In the letters which have reached me as yet, you do not give me as many details as I could wish. If it is not too painful I wish you would tell me all that passed during those last two sad days; all the kind things which I am sure he said respecting either of us; and remember, there is nothing so trifling which it will not interest me to hear.

"But though I look forward to our meeting with so much pleasure, I am afraid it cannot be at Naples. My own health is still very precarious, but it has been a little better lately, and I have determined on leaving this for England in the course of a few weeks. I shall probably travel very slowly, but as my plans are not quite fixed, and depend on circumstances over which I have no control, I cannot give you any very exact dates. I hope, however, to be at Hebworth about the middle of February, and that we shall meet there before the end of that

month at latest. Perhaps you may be surprised that I do not propose some rendezvous on the continent. I cannot at present go into my reasons for it, but I should very much prefer our meeting at Hebworth, which I need hardly beg you to consider as much your home as it has always been during our father's life time.

"Do not be under any anxiety about my travelling in the winter time; I really do feel better and intend to take great care of myself. I hope this will not miss you, but, for fear of accidents, shall send a duplicate letter to Genoa, as I am particularly desirous that we should meet in England. You can write to me at Rome next, where I shall remain a fortnight at least.

"Believe me, dear Henry,

"Your affectionate brother,

"WILLIAM EGERTON."

The passages in this letter which referred to his father's death-bed were peculiarly jarring to Egerton's feelings. Little, indeed, had Sir William imagined the painful recollections which his words would awaken. But there were other

parts of the letter which Egerton could not at all comprehend. It appeared that Sir William had some hidden source of anxiety which he could only impart in person, and that he did not wish for a meeting till the middle of February. There was something mysterious in all this which greatly excited his curiosity, but which he found himself quite unable to fathom. One thing, however, was quite clear, and that was the impossibility of carrying out his original intention of proceeding to Italy.

Egerton had already seen the Rhine, and the season was too far advanced to render a tour in Switzerland agreeable. He had also travelled in Belgium; and as in his present state of mind he wished for something entirely new, he determined on making a little expedition to the Harz mountains, and spending the remainder of the interval before Christmas in Brussels.

Leaving the bulk of his luggage at Cologne, he packed up a few things in a knapsack, proceeded by railway to Halberstadt, and thence by diligence to Blankenburg. All the regular flood of

tourists had gone home long ago, and there were only two or three chance travellers at the table d'hôte. Egerton, therefore, considered himself rather fortunate, in having an intelligent looking Englishman for his neighbour, and soon commenced a conversation. Finding that his new acquaintance had only just arrived in that neighbourhood, and like himself was meditating an expedition to the Regenstein, he suggested that they should visit that romantic spot in company,—a proposition, which was most gladly accepted.

CHAPTER III.

As the days were short it was necessary to start immediately after dinner. On leaving the town they walked along a capital road, with cherry trees growing on both sides of the way, for a distance of two or three miles, and then by a gradual ascent reached the entrance of that extraordinary ruin, which with the rock on which it stands has occasioned so many heartburnings in little Brunswick, against its present more powerful owner. Isolated as this diminutive scrap of Prussia lies in the midst of Brunswick, and

valueless as it probably is in a political point of view, its claim to be considered one of the most romantic and picturesque spots in the whole Harz is unquestionable. Unfortunately we cannot give the reader a scientific description of these Devil's Walls which are so numerous in the Harz, for, the truth must be confessed,—we are not geological. The principal idea we attach to secondary strata is, that they must lie somewhere between primary and tertiary. We are aware that there is a difference between sandstone and mica, and that granite is also distinguishable from chalk, but this is the limit to our acquirements in this branch of science. All that we can venture upon is the assertion that a mass of rock, about a mile and a half in length by two or three hundred yards in breadth, crops out (we rather flatter ourselves that crop is the term) above the surface to the height of perhaps a hundred and fifty feet, and that on the top of it are the ruins of what has formerly been a very large castle.

Several small romantic ravines partially inter-

sect the rock, and greatly add to its picturesqueness by increasing the irregularity of its form. This is all we can venture upon with safety. Oh, no, by the bye! it just occurs to us that we should not risk much in asserting that the coffee to be obtained at the little house in the ruins is an absolutely execrable decoction of unadulterated chicory, and that the thirsty explorer will do well to confine himself to the enjoyment of more convivial beverages.

Egerton's companion appeared to be about eight and thirty years of age. He was rather above the middle height, broad shouldered, and muscularly built. His forehead was massive, and the general expression of his face was grave, but now and then, when occasion offered, it would be lighted up by a bright smile, evincing at once a considerable sense of the humorous, as well as the kind heart and good temper, which are its most necessary accompaniments.

Having, in their ignorance, ordered some of the above-mentioned decoction, the travellers

sat down on a bench just outside the little coffee house, and partially sheltered by a low wall, in order to enjoy the view. Blankenburg, with its picturesque looking palace overhanging the town, lay behind them. The spires of the cathedral and other churches of Halberstadt might be distinguished in the horizon a little to the left, and the ruins of the castle of Regenstein formed a foreground to the picture in whatever direction they might choose to look. A few yards before them the precipice forming the north-east side of the Regenstein descended perpendicularly to the plain, which lay at some distance beneath, and about three hundred yards from its foot an extensive forest stretched out its dark masses of indistinguishable foliage.

"I must confess," said Egerton, "the view of the Regenstein as we walked from Blankenburg had not prepared me for anything as fine as this."

"It is truly wonderful," replied his companion.

"Well, I don't know that I should say that

there was anything exactly wonderful about it, but it is at least beautiful."

"Have you never made this party before?"

Egerton was puzzled, and looked at the speaker inquiringly.

"I mean, have you never been here before?"

"I have never been in the neighbourhood of the Harz before to-day," replied Egerton; "but I intend to ramble about them for a week or two now."

"So," said his companion musingly: "You have come rather late, and will not see the country to the best advantage. I mean, however, to spend a few days in this neighbourhood myself, and shall have much pleasure in introducing you to the most beautiful parties."

Egerton was puzzled how to understand this rather equivocal proposition, but his mind was soon enlightened as to his companion's meaning, when he proceeded:

"Of course you will visit the Rosstrappe. I find it the grandest party of all. Besides which the beauty of the Rosstrappe is more indepen-

dent of the season than most of the other parts of the Harz."

"I intend to go there next," replied Egerton.

"There are many years since I have been there, but I recollect it extremely well; even better than I did the Regenstein."

"Then you have been here before."

"Yes, I was here one Whitsuntide, while a student at the University."

"Are you a Cambridge or an Oxford man?" said Egerton.

"Neither," replied his companion, smiling.

"The London University?"

"Wrong again. I will not mystify you any longer. You have paid my English an unintentional compliment in holding me for one of your countrymen, whereas I am a born German."

"I should never have discovered it by your accent," replied Egerton, "though one or two of your expressions struck me as rather odd."

"I have lived half my life in London, so that

it is not unnatural I should speak English pretty well. I have only come to Germany for a short visit, but shall return to London in three days, and can only say that you will make me a great pleasure if you will call on me there."

Saying these words, the stranger presented Egerton with a card, on which he read the name of William Pardow. Egerton gave his own card in exchange, and promised that he would take some opportunity of renewing the acquaintance in England.

"I left Germany," continued Pardow, "soon after the French revolution of July. At that time I was at the University at Halle, and took a somewhat leading part in forming one of those political societies among the students, the object of which was to obtain a free and united fatherland. Our bubble was a beautiful one, but it soon burst, and like many other young men I had to choose between immediate emigration or the probability of arrest with the prospect of a prison as denouement. I saw then no hope for the good cause, and settled in London, where I

have supported myself by giving lessons in music and German."

"And how have you liked your residence in England?"

"Very differently at different times. I went there full of enthusiasm for England and English institutions. I regarded it as the one land of liberty on the face of the earth, for I was never deluded into the absurd idea that America, with three millions of human beings bought and sold like cows and pigs, had any claim to the name. The struggle, in which I had myself been engaged, seemed to me the great central question of the day, and though perhaps only half conscious of it, I expected to be received among a free people as a martyr in the great cause which they themselves had most at heart. Instead of this, I found myself among some two millions of human beings, with hardly as ingle friend, and had the greatest difficulty in earning the merest necessaries of life."

"And how did you manage to get on at last?" said Egerton.

"I arrived in England with about fifteen pounds in my pocket, and took a cheap lodging near Islington. I advertised two or three times for lessons, but without the slightest result. In a few weeks my money was nearly gone, and I had not made a single shilling or a single friend besides my landlady, and one or two of the principal German refugees. The latter gave me some assistance, but I could not live entirely upon them, and at last my situation became desperate. I had already pawned my great coat for a few shillings, and was thinking what I could best spare next, when my landlady appeared with her bill. I felt she was a good soul, and told her as well as I could in my broken English what my position really was. In the first instance she began to get angry, and to take high ground; but when I told her that she might sell my clothes if she liked, and that I would go into the streets and sweep a crossing, she relented, and instead of pressing her demand, brought me up some of her own dinner. I shall never forget that meal. I had not touched meat for six

days, and I set to with such zest that the good old lady positively sat down on her sofa and cried, merely at the sight of my ravenous hunger. When she began to cry, I began to laugh, but I soon cried too, for her kindness affected me deeply. What with laughing and crying it must have been a curious scene; I have often thought of it since. Well, Mrs. Wilmot was not the woman to do things by halves. She came to me again that evening, and told me that her daughter Marianne wished to learn German, and would take lessons of me. I jumped up from pure delight at the idea of earning something, however trifling, and could hardly refrain from hugging her. Marianne was at that time a daily governess, but she had only her mornings engaged regularly, besides two evenings in the week. She worked very hard at German every afternoon and made rapid progress. The family in which she taught the younger children was that of a barrister in pretty good practice, who had a house in Russell Square. The elder daughters wished to learn German, and she pro-

posed me as a master. After this time I gradually got more pupils and earned a decent livelihood, but it was very uphill work; and there were times when lessons fell off, and I was in the greatest embarrassment. But I always kept up a good heart, and thank God, have struggled well through at last."

"How extremely fortunate for you," said Egerton, much interested, "that you fell in with such a good Samaritan in your landlady! If you still know anything about her, you must introduce me to her when I come to see you in London."

"I still know anything about her!" exclaimed Pardow, "I should think I do indeed. Under no circumstances should I ever have lost her out of sight, but as it turned out, there were additional reasons for my keeping up the acquaintance. Marianne was a superior girl, and her mother had contrived to give her a better education than is usual in that class. There was nothing about her to offend my taste, but on the contrary, much to attract me, for she was hand-

some as well as good. I took a peculiar interest in her, as my first pupil, and she pitied my forlorn situation. Pity, you know, is akin to love. On the plea of giving her an opportunity of practising herself in German conversation, I used to escort her to Russell Square. Ah, those walks! those walks! After a little while she would set out half an hour earlier than necessary, and then we used to walk round the square till the hated church clocks tolled out nine. You can guess the rest. As soon as I had got a sufficiently large connection, which was not, however, for several years, I married her. Little did I foresee on that bright May day how soon my joy would be turned into mourning. She died in her first confinement. We were only married one year, it was the happiest of my life."

"And her mother?" said Egerton.

"Mrs. Wilmot resided with us while my wife lived, and indeed she has continued to keep house for me ever since, at least as long as I was in England. She had managed to save a little money, but unfortunately was induced by a

speculative brother-in-law to invest it in some swindling bubble railway concern, and lost it all. It has been a great relief to me to be able to repay in some measure her great kindness in the days of my adversity. She has the first claim upon me. I owe her everything, and love her as if she were my own mother. She has certainly been a mother to me."

"You must introduce me to her," said Egerton, "I shall call on you as soon as I return to London; but I tell you candidly beforehand, it will be nearly as much to see your mother as yourself."

"Then I must also tell you beforehand," said Pardow, "that you will only find a very simple and kind hearted old woman, but not a lady, in the usual English sense of the word. She never enjoyed any education such as she gave her daughter."

"Never mind that," said Egerton, "she has what is worth far more in my eyes than all the education in the world, and I would sooner make her acquaintance than that of any lady

patroness of Almack's, be she Countess or Duchess."

"You are very kind to speak in that way, but I believe you, and look forward to seeing you in London with no small pleasure; but I think we had better start now on our way back to Blankenburg."

"It seems," said Egerton, as they descended the Regenstein, "it seems that on the whole you have every reason to be satisfied with your success in England."

"Well, I have—it must be confessed; but I have felt very differently towards your countrymen at different times."

"How was that?" asked Egerton.

"During the first ten years of my residence in London, I met with many little annoyances, besides my early pecuniary difficulties. I had had the education of a gentleman, and I had the feelings of one. I often gave lessons to persons far inferior to myself in cultivation, and holding perhaps, a social position inferior to that in which I was myself born; but I generally found that I

was looked down upon as their inferior, and not treated with that respect to which I felt entitled. At first my pride was much hurt at this, and I used to say to myself, that a well educated Englishman would be treated far better in Germany. I believe that I was right in this opinion, and that you do really attach far greater value to outward position, as far at least as it depends on money, than we do. But besides this, I met, like the rest of the world, with coldness, unkindness or neglect, where circumstances had led me to expect a different conduct. These I always attributed to English character, and used to comfort myself with the thought that no German would have acted towards me in a similar way. On the whole, therefore, my estimate of the English character was very unfavourable at the end of these ten years."

"And did anything happen to induce you to alter your opinion?"

"When my wife had been dead about two years I felt a great longing to return to Germany, and finding that I could do so with safety,

I tried the experiment. I spent a couple of years in my fatherland, and picked up a scanty livelihood by translating English novels and writing for the newspapers; but I soon found that coldness and unkindness were by no means peculiar to England, and that they were to be met with all over the world. To mention one of several cases, an intimate friend of mine at the University had been very successful in life; I had repeatedly assisted him when he was a poor student, but the circumstance seemed to have entirely escaped his memory. He was a rising official, and was now in a position to assist me. I accordingly called on him, and asked him to exert his influence in my favour. He received me with great kindness, offered me a cup of coffee and a cigar, promised everything, and did absolutely nothing. Had that happened to me in England, I should have said that it was owing to the cold selfishness of the English character, and I should have been unjust. I now saw that such conduct was owing not to German infirmity or English infirmity, but to human infirmity, and I

soon after returned to England a far wiser man than I had left it, and ceased to attribute all my little rubs and disagreeables to your national character."

"I am glad at any rate," said Egerton, "that your eyes were opened at last."

"They were opened, indeed, and to a far greater extent than I had at first anticipated. During my first residence in England, my personal annoyances had in a great measure blinded me to what is great and good in the English character. Before I went there the first time, I had often heard my countrymen accuse your nation of an overweening regard to their own interests; in short, of the most deeply-rooted selfishness. I used to defend them against this charge, because I could not reconcile it with the noble spirit I thought I recognised in their history and institutions. After I had lived a little while among them, and met with aristocratic reserve from one man, vulgar pretension from another, and saw what an important element money is in determining a man's position in

England, I began to think my countrymen had not been so far wrong after all. But since my return to England the second time, I have begun to look at some of these accusations in a different light."

"But surely you do not mean to justify them?" said Egerton.

"Neither the pride nor the pretension," replied Pardow; "but I think the charge of overweening selfishness unfounded. I mean that my own countrymen look after their own interests every bit as much as the English, although they have not got all the practical qualities to ensure the same amount of success. The German tradesman puffs his wares and tries to compete with his neighbour, as much as the English tradesman does; and the German statesman will try to make treaties advantageous to his own country without any very painful solicitude for the welfare of the state with which he negociates. I blame neither Englishman nor German for these things, but I now see that the real question is, whether the Englishman is not as ready as

the German to make great sacrifices when the occasion requires it, and whether the interests of humanity are not sure to obtain his sympathy and support. The yearly subscriptions to London charities alone fall little short of two millions sterling. A subscription was set on foot to assist poor workwomen to emigrate. It was no national idea, appealing strongly to national vanity, but yet the first seventy subscriptions amounted to more than seventy thousand Prussian dollars. The superior wealth of England, as compared with that of other countries, stands in no proportion to such numbers as these. A poor man cannot suffer any injustice at the hands of an English magistrate, but there is immediately a cry of indignation throughout the whole country. Now, as long as these things are facts, it is absolutely absurd to speak of the English character, as if a devotion to self-interest were its predominant element. If sympathy with suffering and indignation at injustice are powerful motives in their daily life, how absurd it is to suppose that they lose all

weight in national action. Besides, there are proofs enough that they do not. Twenty millions sterling were voted by Parliament for the emancipation of the negroes. When England made peace with China, it was one of the conditions of the treaty that all the commercial advantages she had obtained for herself should be equally open to the rest of the world. That does not look very much like selfishness. As long as my countrymen, partly misled perhaps by disappointed refugee journal correspondents, will only attribute low motives to English policy, they will never comprehend it, and I have often told them so."

"I believe you are right," said Egerton, "and that if there is one quality more than another of which the English have a right to be proud, it is their readiness to sacrifice their own personal interests to any idea involving those of humanity on a larger scale."

"I am sure of it," replied Pardow; "but many Germans will tell you it is all cant, and that cant and hypocrisy are very considerable

elements in the Englishman's religion. There is not a more utterly groundless charge. Canting hypocrites are to be found all over the world, but certainly not in greater abundance in England than elsewhere. There is however, another grave charge against which I cannot defend them, I mean that of bigotry and intolerance. The Church of Rome has only one infallible pope, but in England there are a few infallible popes in every sect; indeed, a great many private individuals do a little infallibility on their own private account; at any rate, they treat the heretics who differ from them with a pious disdain which could be justified by nothing short of a belief in their own infallibility."

"'I am afraid you are right," said Egerton, smiling at the last remark, "and I also fear that this most unchristian intolerance is rather on the increase than the reverse."

"Of all subjects connected with religion," replied Pardow, "I should say that tolerance was the one in which the English are the most open to the charge of cant. One may sometimes hear

a man declaring his respect for another's religious liberty and sincere convictions, while at the same time he avoids all intercourse with him, as if it involved a species of contamination. This is a curious mode of shewing respect. Very few of the private popes assert their spiritual supremacy openly; they only act as if they entertained no doubt of it as a fact."

"As you have shewn the desire to do my countrymen full justice," said Egerton, "I will also confess to another of their faults on which you have touched but lightly: I mean their absurd pride of rank and station."

"The man of genuine aristocratic pride," answered Pardow, "is very much the same all over the world, a man with a small mind who endeavours to make up for its smallness by the greatness of his pretensions. But I think the greater wealth of England places a larger number of persons in that outward position which enables them to obtain some recognition of their pretensions from the multitude."

"I accept your definition," said Egerton,

"and notwithstanding your remark that human frailty is often mistaken for national frailty, I firmly believe that this is peculiarly an English vice. England plumes herself on her high Christian *morale*, and yet for the supercilious treatment of men 'not in our set,' there is no man equal to your very Christian English gentleman."

"I fear you are right," said Pardow.

"One lamentable result," continued Egerton, "is the number of impenetrable barriers which are to be found between the various classes of society, and the greater difficulty with which refinement of manners can penetrate downwards from the higher to the lower strata of society. I am much afraid that the working classes in England are far coarser than the same rank in Germany. Have you not found it so?"

"Yes, and no," replied Pardow. "The phrase 'working classes' comprises men of very different degrees of cultivation. The class of unskilled labour in England is decidedly rougher than in Germany; but if you approach the class of

skilled labour with the respect which is no less their due than yours, I think that you will find that they know how to respect both themselves and you. There is, however a dogged spirit of independence about an Englishman, which is very apt to take the form of a rude answer, if he thinks you are adopting a condescending tone towards him. You may call this want of refinement if you like, but after all it is only the natural expression of the resentment which every gentleman will feel at a supposed insult. Indeed it is this very spirit of independence which has made England what she is. But here we are at our hotel. Are you inclined to start for the Rosstrappe and Hexen Tanz-Platz to-morrow?"

"I shall most willingly place myself under your guidance as long as you will afford it me," said Egerton.

"Good. Breakfast at eight, start at nine. I am going to see a good friend of mine here this evening, so good night."

CHAPTER IV.

THE next morning Egerton and Pardow started on their expedition to the valley of the Bode. Their road lay partly through open fields, and partly through cherry orchards skirting a forest. In rather more than two hours they arrived at the Hubertus Bad, which lies at the entrance of the finest ravine in the Harz mountains, if not indeed in all North Germany; but its beauty is not to be seen from that point.

"Now," said Pardow, "there is a weighty question to be settled. If you are at all tired

and would prefer taking the nearest road to the inn, a quarter of an hour's walk up this ravine will bring us to the Waldkater, one of the best inns in the whole Harz. You will then be in the midst of the beauties of the Bode. If, however, you are inclined for an hour's more walking, I will introduce you to them in a manner which will greatly heighten their effect."

"I am not at all tired," said Egerton, "and should therefore prefer the latter plan."

Instead of entering the ravine, they crossed the road that led into it, and skirting the bottom of the wooded hill which lay to their right, soon reached another road leading to Victor's Höhe and Alexisbad. They here turned to the right and followed the road up hill, which was not very steep, and presented nothing very striking before them. There were, however, several points at which the view of the plain behind them, seen through the rocks as a frame, became highly picturesque.

After they had walked about a mile, they left the road and ascended the hill to the right by

a steep path leading through some low underwood. At length they came out upon an orchard, and following the footpath, reached a small house.

"Now," said Pardow, "we have reached the spot called the Hexen Tanz-Platz, or Witches' dancing ground, celebrated as one of the most striking points in the country."

Egerton looked round, but saw nothing very remarkable, and was beginning to wonder to himself that an orchard without a view should have obtained such a reputation.

"Will you oblige me by shutting your eyes for a few minutes, and trusting yourself entirely to my guidance? I will undertake that you shall come to no harm."

Egerton complied, and after walking about fifty yards, and descending a few stone steps, he found his further progress impeded by a wooden balustrade.

"Now open your eyes."

Egerton found himself standing on a small platform of rock at the very edge of a bold pre-

cipice, with a wild ravine immediately before him and extending on either side. Its depth from the point at which he stood was nearly eight hundred feet. Its sides were formed by grey rocks interspersed with a few trees wherever a small ledge offered room for their roots; and at its bottom the waters of the Bode dashed over their rocky bed, and presented a broad bright line of silver as they foamed and sparkled in the sun. The view was extremely grand, and all the more striking from the suddenness with which he had come upon it. He leant over the balustrade, and gazed for some minutes in silence.

"Is not that wonderful?" said Pardow, at length.

"This is the grandest thing," replied Egerton, "I have seen out of Switzerland or the Tyrol. I admired the Regenstein very much, but this decidedly surpasses it."

"There is one point still finer than this, and that is the Rosse-trappe. It is that small platform of rock to our left, on the opposite side of

the ravine. You see that it lies rather lower than the Hexen Tanz-Platz. The view on the whole is very similar to this, but decidedly finer. It labours, however, under one disadvantage in comparison, and as one sees the valley of the Bode a considerable time before reaching the Ross-trappe, so that it is impossible to enjoy the surprise which you have just had, and which greatly heightens the first impression. Farther up the valley to the left is a fine waterfall, called the Bode Kessel. We ought to go there this afternoon, but at present I think we had better descend, and see what mine host of the Forest Cat can provide us in the way of a dinner."

At a very short distance from the Hexen Tanz-Platz, they came to a rude staircase made of rough stones, and leading to the valley below. After descending somewhat more than eleven hundred steps, they found themselves at the back of a substantial looking country inn, immediately on the edge of the Bode.

A good dinner was soon forthcoming, for the refreshment of the outer man, after which they

repaired to the Old Forest Cat, (a little coffee house belonging to the Inn, and only forty yards from it), for the purpose of enjoying their coffee and the view.

"That tall rock with the flagstaff upon it, immediately opposite the inn," said Pardow, "is called the Jäger, or huntsman. The bench at its foot is Emilien's-Ruh, or Emily's rest.

"The Forest Cat is an odd name for an inn," said Egerton, "but suitable to its wild situation. Have all these names any particular signification?"

"There is, of course, a legend," replied Pardow, "in which they all appear. I will repeat it to you, if you like, premising that the name of the present landlord, who built the inn, is Fessel."

Eine sehr alte Sage des Bode-Thals, welche wahrscheinlich aus der Mitte des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts herstammt.

Es war einmal ein Rittersmann,
Der hiess Baron von Fessel.
Er ritt die wilde Schlucht herab,
Zum tobenden Bode Kessel.

Ach Gott! Er hört ein Angstgeschrei!
Es sträubt sich ihm das Haar.
Er sieht ein Weib! Ein schönes Weib!
Und gross war die Gefahr!

Denn rings herum die Kater wild,
Die an der Bode hausen,
Und wo im Kampf mit Fels und Stein
Die Wogen schäumend brausen.

Die wilden Kater rings herum,
Sie stürzen auf sie los!
Es hilft ihr nichts die Schönheit jetzt,
Die Noth war all zu gross.

Aus jedem Baum, aus jeder Kluft,
Sie glotzen mit den Augen,
Und knirschen mit den Zähnen gar,
Als wollten schier sie saugen.

Ihr Herzens-Blut! Das arme Weib!
Die Noth war all zu gross;
Denn rings herum die Kater wild,
Sie stürzen auf sie los.

Es schien, als wäre jeder Fels,
Ja, jeder Stein, lebendig!
Der Ritter aber war ein Mann,
So tapfer wie behendig.

Er zieht sein Schwerdt, sein gutes Schwerdt,
Er haut sie alle nieder.
Der Ritter war ein wack'rer Mann,
Und treu war er und bieder.

Und wie ein Löwe kämpft er jetzt,
Er führt die Klinge gut.
Die grauen Felsen rings herum
Sind schon bespritzt mit Blut.

Er jagt kie Kater hin und her,
Er jagt sie in die Fluth;
Denn keine Gränzen kennt sie mehr,
Des wack'ren Ritters Wuth.

Er jagt sie hin, er jagt sie her,
Schon viele liegen todt!
Wo sonst das Wasser schaümte weiss,
Nun schaümt es dunkelroth!

Das Mädchen floh,—ein Kater nach,—
Und dann! Ach Gott im Himmel!
Ritt wie ein Sturmwind der Baron
Auf seinem alten Schimmel.

Die Felsen auf! die Felsen ab!
Ach, das war eine Jagd!
Du hast in deinem Leben nie
Ein solchen Streich gewagt!

Voran das Weib, der Kater nach,
Zuletzt der wack're Fessel,
Als wollten sie ertrinken all,
Im tiefen Bode Kessel!

Nun Gott sey Dank! Vom Felsen ab
Der Kater sprang hinunter,
Das Mädchen sank zu Boden matt,
Doch Fessel war recht munter.

Vom Felsen sprang das Thier hinab,
Zerschmettert sich den Schädel,
Und so der edle Ritter kühn,
Er (rettete) das Mädel.

Dann flüstert er Emilia zu,
" Sei du mein treues Weib!
Vor jedem Unheil schütz' ich dich
Mit Seele und mit Leib!"

Sie sagt nicht nein, sie sagt nicht ja,
Sie lächelt aber fein;
Er drückt sie an die Brust und schwört,
"Du bist auf ewig mein!

"Und wo der Kater starb, bei Gott!
Da bau' ich mir ein Schloss,
Und jedermann der Obdach sucht
Für sich und auch sein Ross,

"Der steiged reist bei mir herab,
Willkommen soll er sein;
Den lab' ich gern mit guter Kost,
Und auch mit edlem Wein.

"Waldkater heissen soll das Schloss,
Und wo, Emilia, du
Nach deiner Angst zu Boden sankst,
Das heiss' Emiliens-Ruh.

"Die Klippe aber, wo das Thier
Herunter ist gesprungen,
Soll Jäger heissen, weil die Jagd
Ist mir so gut gelungen."

"Upon my word," said Egerton, as Pardow concluded, "your knight lost no time in making love. At any rate he has fulfilled his promise of the *gute Kost* and *edler Wein*. Perhaps we may as well start now for the Bode Kessel."

"This Bode Thal," said Pardow, rising from his seat, "is by far the grandest part of the Harz. I enjoy a ramble in it beyond all measure, for

in my student's days I made several breakneck excursions in the neighbourhood, and have therefore many pleasant associations with it. Ah," he continued with a sigh, "that student's life was a very enjoyable bit of existence."

"I have always heard your countrymen speak with a certain degree of enthusiasm of their student's life," replied Egerton, "but I never could make out exactly in what its very great charm lies."

"I think I can tell you that in a very few words. The peculiar charm for a German student is the idea that he is a free man, not fettered by the innumerable conventionalities which exercise such a tyrannical influence in every other form of social life."

"But is this freedom something real, or is it only an idea?"

"Well," said Pardow smiling, "the question is rather a delicate one when addressed to a quondam German student, but it is my belief that the only real freedom worth having must ultimately depend on the force and independence of a man's

own character. The freedom which displays itself in peculiarities of dress, or in fighting a sort of sham duel, does not appear to me to be very valuable."

"Perhaps not," said Egerton, "but still in as far as it arises from the determination to be free, it has its merits. The real question, however, is whether it is the determination to *be* free or to *seem* free. Is there, for instance a powerful public opinion among the students in these matters?"

"Certainly. A student dreads to do anything that can be called *philisterhaft.*"

"Does *philisterhaft* mean anything essentially and morally dishonourable?"

"Oh, no, only dishonourable according to the students' code."

"Then it seems to me," said Egerton, "that the German student is still subject to conventionalities, only not the same as the rest of society. In short, the students as a body have emancipated themselves from many existing social conventionalities, but the individual student is

as much subject to the dread of being *philisterhaft*, as a man living in other society is subject to the dread of being out of the fashion.'

"Rather more so," said Pardow.

"Now what I want to know is this. Is there anything in the liberty of a student's life particularly calculated to build up a free and independent tone of thought and feeling, which shall stand him in good stead in after life? If there is, then indeed they possess a valuable liberty, but if not, I don't quite see what the liberty is worth."

"You press me rather hard," replied Pardow, "but to be quite candid, I am afraid that the German student's life does not effect much in the way you mention, for look at the result. All clergymen, schoolmasters, and official persons of a certain rank have been educated at a University, but there is nothing particularly free about the great majority of them in after life, either as regards thought or action."

"That is the point," said Egerton.

"It would not be quite fair however," con-

tinued Pardow, "to confound the students belonging to Burschenschaften with those belonging to Corps. The former have higher objects, and reckon among their numbers a nobler class of men. But speaking of the students generally, I am afraid they do not display in after life any great amount of the independence for which you are seeking."

"To what do you ascribe it?" said Egerton.

"To centralisation. More than one half of the educated men are entirely dependent on government for their advancement in life. It would be expecting too much of human nature to demand that they should be willing to sacrifice their worldly prospects to their feelings and opinions and play the martyr, so they adopt the opposite policy and sacrifice their feelings and opinions to their prospects, and in a short time believe according to the pattern prescribed. Of course there are innumerable exceptions. I am merely speaking of the effect of this centralisation on the average mind. How

well do I remember Donnerblitz! He was a wild fellow at the University, the beau ideal of a good Bursche at Leipzig, the idol of Heidelberg. It was not his big boots, his braided velveteen coat, or his black beard alone, but his unqualified assertion of his own freedom, and his hatred of all that is *philisterhaft.* Two years afterwards, I met him in black trowsers, white waistcoat, and dress coat, all shaven and shorn and looking as meek and as mild as a lamb. He wanted a place and was going to call on some great man in authority."

"Did he succeed?"

"Oh, yes certainly. Donnerblitz is now a very flourishing official, and a red hot conservative. He has been ennobled and has changed his name. He is now a Herr von Frack, Director in the Ministerium of Schwatzenburg Schneiderhausen, and expects ere long to be Prime Minister of Schwatzenburg Trudelstadt; at least I hear that his appointment is contemplated."

"Do you think then that his previous character was assumed?"

"Not in the least. But after he had left the University, Donnerblitz saw that his student's opinions, if persisted in, would involve starvation. His father was not a wealthy man. What could a poor Donnerblitz do? He had not got the stuff in him for a martyr even on the smallest scale, so he set to work to see things from a government point of view, and succeeded; at least he thought he succeeded. He may perhaps have misgivings sometimes, but I almost doubt it. At any rate he soon smothers them with a few stereotyped phrases, about the destructive character of the liberalism of the age. It certainly does not require any vast amount of political insight to see that of all creeds ultra-conservatism is the most destructive in its tendencies, and the most dangerous to monarchical institutions, but it requires more than Donnerblitz possesses. Had he been more of a man, he would have been less of an official, and would never have been able to sign himself as his Excellency, Herr von Frack."

"But if this centralisation is so incompatible

with liberty, I wonder that public opinion has not, in the course of time compelled the government to modify its system. Let us take, for instance, the legal profession. Why could not a great deal of the work, which is now performed in Germany by official persons, be left, as in England, to private and therefore independent practitioners?"

"That question is easily answered," replied Pardow. "Whatever may be the case with public opinion, public feeling is against a change in the direction you mention. A German loves official rank dearly. A commoner is regarded as little more than an adventurer, until the government has put its stamp upon him, and he has got some sort of official handle to his name. Two young men of unexceptionable character and of equal merit in all other respects are suitors for the hand of a young lady, but the one has two thousand dollars a year from his business, the other one thousand dollars salary and some little official title. Papa shuts the

door in the merchant's face, and rejoices to have his daughter a something-or-other-räthin (counselloress). Depend upon it there will be no true freedom for Germany until the Germans have learnt the truth of Burns' lines—

> "The rank is but the guinea's stamp,
> The man's the gow'd for a' that.'

CHAPTER V.

The last day that Egerton had spent at Oakwood had been a very eventful one for Bertha. She had felt thoroughly miserable in the morning, and had endeavoured to forget her own griefs by endeavouring to assuage those of others, and thus forcing her thoughts into a different channel. But the consciousness that her feelings towards Egerton had far passed the limit of a friendly interest, and were no longer within her own control, and the uncertainty whether they were justified by any reciprocal feeling on his side, or

whether she might not have attributed too much meaning to trifles, made the whole subject so extremely painful, that she found it impossible to banish it entirely from her mind. Her unhappiness reached its climax when Mary made the remark which appeared in the first instance so very unfortunate, but which led eventually to such different results. The humiliating conviction that Egerton had read the secret of her heart, and that she had become an object of his pity, had quite overwhelmed her, and she had hurried off to the lonely sea-shore as the one spot where she might safely indulge the bitterness of her feelings with the least danger of intrusion. But scarcely had she reached "The Solitude," when the quick step on the shingle had caught her ear, and her fear had turned to hope, and her hope to certainty. The revulsion of feeling had completely overpowered her, and she could only answer the confession of his love by tears,—such tears as a woman sheds but once. And then had followed that happy interchange of confidence, which had converted the deepest

gloom into brightest day, for she felt that Egerton's pictures of the future derived much of the brilliancy of their colouring from an affection no less deep or tender than her own, but exceeding it in that passionate ardour which is more peculiarly the attribute of a man's love. The hours had slipped away unmarked, the sun had set behind the lofty cliffs, warning her that the hour of parting was rapidly approaching, but only, as she had fondly thought, to rise again on a happier day than any she had yet known, by adding a father's sanction to her dearest hopes. Then came that terrible and unexpected message which tore Egerton away from her presence, and was so soon to be followed by one yet sadder,—that announcing Sir Roderick's death. As she had never known Sir Roderick, nor even heard him spoken of by her father, except as a proud ungenial man, the sorrow she felt was not so much on his own account, as because it involved the bereavement of the man she loved. Egerton had rarely mentioned his father's name at Oakwood, but she knew that he

was much attached to him and would feel his loss deeply. She would have given worlds to be near him in his affliction, and to have offered him the consolation of her sympathy; but this was denied her. Still she had much for which to be thankful; for had Egerton been called away one day earlier, he would have left her in that dreadful suspense which had become so unspeakably painful, and instead of the prospect of happiness which the assurance of his love had now opened to her, the future would have presented a cold monotonous blank.

Notwithstanding the warm affection which Bertha and Mary bore to one another, they did not share each other's confidence on terms of perfect reciprocity. Mary was accustomed to communicate all her joys and sorrows to Bertha, without any reserve, and never missed the sisterly sympathy in the one or consolation and advice in the other for which her weaker nature yearned. Bertha would also confide her joys to Mary, but she was more reserved with her sorrows, as she felt that she had a greater fund

of strength in her own nature than any which Mary had to offer. Upon one or two occasions, Mary had let fall playful allusions to Egerton's evident admiration of her elder sister, but they did not meet with any encouragement, and she had dropped the subject. During the days of Bertha's doubt, Mary's penetration, rendered more acute by her own attachment, enabled her to detect the cause of her sister's depression, but the subject was not mentioned between them. Bertha felt that the struggle before her was one that she must fight out alone, and that in such a moment to fly to others yet weaker than ourselves is but the resource of weakness. Now, however, that the doubt was dispelled, and she felt sure of Egerton's affection, she opened her heart to her younger sister, and told her of that joyful assurance which had made the last few hours the happiest of her life, as well as something of the preceding trials which had made that happiness all the brighter by contrast. Mary listened with all the warm interest in the tale, which her own position as well as her love for

Bertha, were sure to elicit, and it was not till very late that night that she kissed her sister, and retired to her own room.

As soon as Sir Roderick's funeral had taken place, Bertha hoped that it would not be long before Egerton made his appearance again at Oakwood; but she was doomed to be disappointed. Day passed after day, and days soon grew to weeks—but still he did not come. The delay was very trying, but the certainty of his love was in itself such a deep source of joy that she bore up bravely, and never doubted that there were ample reasons for his protracted absence, if she did but know them. At last Herbert informed her that he had received a letter from Egerton to the effect that business connected with his father's affairs, as well as other circumstances, made it imperative on him not to leave Hebworth for several weeks. As Hebworth was only a few hours ride from Oakwood, perhaps the thought crossed her mind occasionally that he might have managed to spare her one day. But her deep faith in the

sincerity of his attachment, and the consciousness that nothing short of absolute necessity would have kept herself away, had their circumstances been reversed, soon dispelled these doubts, and convinced her that his uninterrupted presence at Hebworth was really indispensable.

As time rolled on, she flattered herself with the hope that nothing would detain him much longer. Many an anxious glance did she cast over the drive, from the window of her boudoir, but only to be disappointed. While engaged one morning in reflections which were now beginning to be painful, she saw a gentleman on horseback riding towards the house. Her heart beat quick, for she thought at first that she recognized the figure of Egerton; but as he drew nearer she became aware that her imagination had deceived her, and that it was only her cousin Herbert. Hastily throwing a shawl around her, she went out to meet him. Herbert gave his horse to a servant, and hurried her off into a neighbouring walk.

"I have just received a letter from Egerton," he said, "and I don't quite like its contents."

"He is not ill! oh, Herbert, tell me the worst at once."

"Oh, no; on the contrary, I believe he is quite well. I said I did not like the contents, merely because I had been hoping to see him here before I returned to Cambridge, but I find that his plans will render this impossible. To confess the truth, Bertha, he told me in his former letter that he would be obliged to go abroad the instant he left Hebworth, and could not come here even for a single day. I did not mention this at first, as I thought it just possible he might change his plans, and I wished to spare you any unnecessary annoyance. He now writes, however, that he is to leave Hebworth in a couple of days for Italy, where he intends to join Sir William."

"For Italy!" exclaimed Bertha, in a tone which betrayed the greatness of her disappointment, perhaps not quite unmingled with a shade of resentment.

"He adds," continued Herbert, "that there are circumstances connected with his father's death which he cannot explain, but which entirely prevent his being able to come here, even for a short visit. He begs me, however, to assure you that it is extremely painful to him to leave England in this manner, and that nothing could increase his regret so much as the thought that his continued absence from Stonecombe might be misinterpreted by you. He hopes, therefore, that you will not lose faith in the truth and ardour of his love because he is obliged to take so unusual a step. When I saw you come out to meet me, Bertha, I thought I might as well tell you directly, instead of through Mary, for as I am Egerton's most intimate friend and your cousin, there need be no sort of prudery between us."

"Thank you, Herbert, I think so too," said Bertha, blushing. "But tell me honestly, can you divine what it is that makes it so impossible for him to sacrifice even one day to—to Stonecombe?"

"I have not the slightest idea," replied Herbert, "but I think it must be something in which his duty to others makes secrecy imperative. You have not known him so long as I have, Bertha, and therefore, I will assure you on my honor that it is my firm conviction he would come here if he could, and that there are circumstances which make it wrong for him to follow his inclination."

"I am sure of it," said Bertha hastily, "your engagement to Mary, Herbert, enables me to speak more openly than I could have done to you as a mere cousin, and I need hardly tell you how very painful anything like apparent neglect must be to a woman situated as I am now. Promise me, Herbert, promise me, that if anything should come to your knowledge which should lead you to think that—that—I mean that he has repented his choice—that in short—"

Bertha's feelings overpowered her, and she burst into tears.

"Oh, dear Bertha, pray don't harbour such a thought for an instant. I would answer for

Egerton's truth and loyalty as readily as for my own. I can have no hesitation in giving you the promise you require, but I am sure I shall not have any opportunity of keeping it. Now pray do not let this unhappy combination of circumstances shake your faith for an instant in Egerton's constancy; depend upon it, there is some good reason for this step, which we should all approve if we did but know it."

"I do not think," said Bertha, "that out of a mistaken kindness you would deceive me in such a question as this, and I have a deeper faith in Mr. Egerton than perhaps you might be inclined to imagine, after what you have just seen. But it is so very difficult to conceive any business that can make a single day of such moment, that for one instant, perhaps, I feared he might have mistaken his feelings, and—and—but you have comforted me, Herbert, and I shall not be so weak again."

After the above conversation Bertha's spirits became more equal than they had been during the preceding weeks. It seemed a long and

weary time to look forward to before she could expect to see Egerton in the spring, but she had come to the conclusion that however unaccountable his conduct might appear, he had good reasons for it, and that it would be both ungenerous and unjust to doubt the sincerity of his attachment without much stronger grounds for doing so. Her faith, however, was destined to receive some external support. About a fortnight might have elapsed after Herbert had received the last-mentioned letter, when another reached him, to the following effect:—

"Wernigerode, im Harz,
"Oct. 24, 184—.

"My Dear Herbert,

"You will be a good deal surprised at the date of this letter, as you are fondly imagining that I am on the road to Italy. So indeed I was till a few days ago, but a letter from my brother which reached me at Cologne has again altered my plans. He does not wish me to proceed to Rome, as he intends to return to England, and

expects to be at Hebworth in February, where he proposes we should meet about the middle of that month. This has of course made me wish to return to Stonecombe, but unfortunately there are very strong reasons against it. Some of them are of such a nature that I cannot communicate them to anybody; but I may mention one. My father's death is too recent to allow of my speaking to Mr. Campbell immediately on the one subject involving my own future happiness, and indeed I should feel it to be an act of disrespect to his memory. I could not therefore visit at Oakwood as Bertha's acknowledged suitor, and it would be very painful to me to visit it in any other character; and after what has passed between us the propriety of my doing so is perhaps questionable. I have therefore determined on spending the next few months on the continent, and shall return to England soon after Christmas.

"I have enjoyed my trip in the Harz mountains as much as I could expect to enjoy anything at the present time, but I shall know nothing like

real peace until I have obtained Mr. Campbell's consent. Pray write soon, and give me a very full account of Oakwood and its inhabitants. Above all things, do not let her think that my prolonged absence is owing to anything like coldness. Were she to think so, she would do me great injustice, for I assure you she is never out of my thoughts. Address to me next at Cologne, and believe me ever

"Yours very sincerely,

"HENRY EGERTON.

"P.S.—I am just going to start for the Brocken with a new German acquaintance named Pardow. He is a fine fellow, and I am sure you will like him. He lives in London, so I hope to see more of him."

Herbert received the above letter at Cambridge, and instantly inclosed it in one to Mary, as the surest means of its reaching the person for whom its contents were more particularly intended. Bertha thought that the reasons as-

signed were hardly sufficient to account for Egerton's passing several months abroad without any definite object, but the allusion to other reasons, together with the general tone of the letter reassured her, and she felt a good deal happier after reading it.

Although Mr. Campbell loved his children after his own peculiar fashion, there was a certain hardness about his character as well as an irritability of temper, which prevented the growth of any very intimate confidence between him and them. He had observed with pleasure the attachment between Egerton and Bertha, and felt very little doubt that they had come to some mutual understanding, but he thought it better not to interfere in any way until his consent to their union should be applied for in due form. He regarded Egerton's prolonged absence from Oakwood at first, with a feeling of surprise and then of anger, for as he was not made acquainted with any of the explanatory circumstances, he began to fear that his daughter's affections had been wantonly trifled with.

The state of anxiety and suspense in which Bertha had been living for several months had exercised a visible effect on her spirits, which had not escaped her father's observation.

Thinking that perhaps a change of scene might prove beneficial to her, he wrote to his sister, Miss Harriet Campbell, without the knowledge of his daughters, and requested her to invite Bertha to Scotland for a few months. As Aunt Harriet had long wished for a visit from one of her nieces, she gladly complied, and a most pressing invitation arrived at Oakwood on the day after Christmas day. Nothing could have happened less opportunely for Bertha, as she was looking forward to Egerton's return to England in the course of a few weeks at latest. Mary saw her sister's extreme distress, and though she entertained considerable alarm at the idea of such an enterprise, bravely undertook to open her father's eyes to the real state of the case. She knew her father's obstinacy when once he had taken any plan into his head, and felt considerably embarrassed as to the best way

of opening the subject. But she remembered that Bertha's happiness was at stake, and summoning up all her courage, knocked gently at the study door.

"Come in," was the reply.

"Papa, can I speak to you for a few minutes?"

"Certainly, dear," said Mr. Campbell, somewhat surprised at the formality of the request.

"I wanted to ask you about this visit of Bertha's to Edinburgh."

"We all go to London next Monday, Mary. I have written to Patterson about an escort for Bertha, and have this morning received an answer that his partner, Mr. Andrews, is going to Scotland next week, and will take charge of your sister. So that is settled. I shall remain a month or two in London, and you can pay visits to your friends. The Walsinghams will be glad to see you for a few weeks."

"But must Bertha go to Scotland, papa? Because I think that if you would allow her, she would rather—"

"Never mind, Mary, what she would rather. I have not chosen this plan for her without my reasons, and therefore the less said about it the better. On Monday we start; that's certain."

"But, papa—" Mary hesitated.

"Well, love?"

"Mr. Egerton is coming to—"

Mr. Campbell's brows contracted.

"Mr. Egerton's movements," said Mr. Campbell, interrupting his daughter rather sharply, "can have no influence on ours. I did think at one time—but, however, that's nothing to the purpose. We have been at Oakwood all the autumn, while Mr. Egerton has been amusing himself on the Continent. If there was anything that he wanted to say to me, he might have found an opportunity before this. I certainly shall not allow any daughter of mine to regulate her conduct to suit the convenience of a young man who does not seem to know his own mind."

"But indeed, papa, I am sure he has had good reasons for remaining abroad all this time."

"Has he written to you or Bertha on the subject, Mary?" replied Mr. Campbell, somewhat sardonically.

"No, not that," said Mary blushing, "but—"

"Say no more about it, dear; my plans are quite settled, and with a view to Bertha's real good, which I trust I can judge of better than either of you. But I am busy now, so go and make your preparations, for we start next Monday, that's certain."

Mary knew she would only make her father angry by attempting to prolong the conversation, and left the room with a heavy heart to tell her sister its unsuccessful termination.

Had Bertha entertained an equally strong objection to the visit to Scotland on any other grounds, she would not have employed Mary as her ambassador, but would have spoken to her father herself. Had she even been in a position to give a satisfactory explanation of Egerton's stay in Germany, she would most probably have preferred that course. But to enter upon any discussion with her father on a subject in which

her attachment to Egerton and her faith in his constancy must necessarily form a large part of her argument, was so extremely repugnant to her feelings, that she felt unequal to the task, and gladly resigned it to Mary.

Monday arrived and the whole party left Oakwood for London. Mary went to her friends the Walsinghams for a fortnight, and then returned to her father, who had taken a furnished house for a few months at Bayswater. Bertha proceeded to Edinburgh, and Mr. Campbell's plans were carried out in every respect with that exactitude and rigidity in which he most delighted.

Aunt Harriet did her best to make her niece's visit agreeable, and Bertha was much touched by her kindness, but still she was undergoing a species of penance, and looked forward with ardent longing to the time fixed for its termination. It had never been Mr. Campbell's intention to spend the season in London, and when Bertha rejoined her father and sister in the beginning of May, they returned to the country immediately.

While Egerton was still abroad, he had received letters from Sir William, dated Rome, informing him that his health had not been quite so good lately, and that that, as well as other circumstances, would prevent his keeping his appointment at Hebworth in February, but adding that he hoped to be there by the end of March. Egerton, however, returned to England according to his former plan, and reached Hebworth exactly six months from the day on which he had given his father the promise, that had caused both himself and Bertha so much unhappiness. The next morning he rode over to Stonecombe, and had hardly entered the town when he met Dr. Freeman.

The doctor greeted him very cordially, and then communicated the unwelcome intelligence that the family was no longer at Oakwood, as they had left it some weeks previously, and that Miss Campbell had gone to Edinburgh on a visit of several months. It is only justice to Herbert to add that he had previously written all these disagreeable tidings to Egerton,

but the letter had never reached its destination.

Not finding the object of his search at Oakwood, Egerton immediately returned to London, and presented himself at Bayswater. It was his intention to follow up his visit with a formal application for Mr. Campbell's permission to pay his addresses to Miss Campbell, but to his great disappointment he was not admitted. He called again the next day, but with no better success, as Mr. Campbell was not at home. Not suspecting that this denial was anything more than the result of accident, he determined to try his fortune a third time. Just as he was within a short distance of his goal he saw a carriage drive up, and Mr. Campbell step out of it and enter the house. The door was hardly closed when Egerton presented himself, and to his no small astonishment was again informed that Mr. Campbell was not at home. This time there could be no room for mistake; Mr. Campbell must have given orders that he was not to be admitted. It seemed quite inexplicable. At Oak-

wood he had always been received with the greatest kindness, and he had had every reason to believe that his attentions to Bertha had been favorably regarded by her father; and now, without the occurrence of anything to alter their relative position, he actually found himself forbidden the house.

Egerton's conclusion was correct, as Mr. Campbell had really given orders to the servants not to admit him. The fact was, Mr. Campbell had felt considerably irritated against Egerton, as he had taken it into his head that he had been guilty of a most unwarrantable trifling with Bertha's happiness. His pride had also been roused by a crafty insinuation, thrown out in an accidental manner by Mr. Walker, who, on one occasion had spoken of Egerton as that 'young gay Lothario.' "He may be the son of a baronet," said Mr. Campbell to himself, "but he shall soon find that paying attentions to Miss Campbell is not the same sort of thing as a flirtation with a farmer's daughter, to be taken up

or laid aside just as the humour of the moment may prompt."

Upon receiving the above-mentioned rebuff, Egerton's first impulse was to write to Mr. Campbell, requesting an interview, and begging him to name any hour that would be most convenient. When, however, he considered that Mr. Campbell's repeated denial of himself must have some grounds, he concluded that it would be better to clear up the misunderstanding, should any exist, before entering upon more delicate topics. With this object, he went down to Cambridge in the hope that Herbert might be able to throw some light on what appeared at present so inexplicable.

The meeting of the friends was a very hearty one. After the first interchange of greetings and commonplaces, Egerton related what had passed, and then asked Herbert if he could divine the motives of his uncle's conduct.

"Partly," was Herbert's reply, "but not entirely. At any rate I know of no justifiable

motives for what I must consider, under the circumstances, to be an act of great rudeness. As I know you wish for perfect candour from me, I will honestly confess to you that we have all felt rather surprised at your remaining so long abroad, after having had an explanation with Bertha. I do not doubt for an instant that you had good reasons for your conduct, and I do not wish to pry into them. But still, those who do not know you as well as I do, may be excused for thinking that you have taken the whole affair rather easily."

"Then it is your opinion," said Egerton, somewhat relieved, "that your uncle considers I have been trifling with—"

"Exactly so," said Herbert, "indeed I am almost sure of it."

"But Bertha does not think so?" said Egerton eagerly.

"Heaven forbid! I have taken care to impress on Mary's mind and Bertha's too, that you were as deeply attached to her as ever."

"Thank you, Herbert, you have only done me

justice. I assure you, that if I could tell you all, you would exculpate me from anything like trifling in this affair. But neither to you nor to any one else can I explain all my motives. The practical question now is, how to undeceive Mr. Campbell."

"I know my uncle's character pretty well," replied Herbert. "He has many good qualities, but he is obstinate and irritable, and it is my belief, that considering his present state of mind you had better let the matter rest. He will return to Oakwood in May at latest, and I shall then be at Stonecombe. You can pay me a visit, and that alone will have some effect in undeceiving him. While you are staying with me, he can hardly refuse to see you again, and you will soon find yourself visiting at Oakwood on the former footing."

"Why, Herbert, you almost make me think you have never been in love after all! It is really two months till May, man, and how can I wait all that time? Your advice may be good, but it is almost impossible for me to follow it. Just

think of the agony of suspense I have been in all these last six months, in short, ever since I was at Stonecombe."

"Well, if you can hit upon a better plan—"

"But after all," said Egerton, interrupting him, "why not go straight to Mr. Campbell, and tell him I have never ceased to love his daughter, and never shall cease; that I had longed for nothing so ardently as his consent to our union, and that I hope he will not refuse it now?"

"If you go to him now you will not get it. I may be mistaken, but that is my decided opinion."

"Supposing I run down to Scotland and see Bertha herself?"

"Worse and worse. Mr. Campbell is not in the humour to see your conduct in the most favorable light, and he would then say, that after he had refused to see you at his own house, you took advantage of his daughter's absence to—"

"I see, I see," said Egerton impatiently, "I

believe you are right; but upon my word it is a greater trial of patience than I have had to undergo in the whole course of my life. Two long months! and then Bertha at Edinburgh all this time!"

"I will answer for Bertha's constancy," said Herbert.

"I did not doubt her constancy," replied Egerton, "but if she loves me as well as I am coxcomb enough to believe, it will be no small trial to her either."

Egerton took his friend's advice, and left Mr. Campbell in peace. He spent the probationary interim between London and Hebworth. He did not see Mr. Campbell during the whole of this time, but on one occasion he met Mary at an evening party.

By a curious coincidence, Bertha received a letter from her sister two days afterwards which brought the colour to her cheeks, and made her feel happier than she had done since her arrival in Edinburgh.

At length, as we have already recorded, the

family returned to Oakwood, and two days afterwards Herbert walked over from the Vicarage to inform his cousins that he was expecting a visit from Egerton the following day. We cannot state it as a fact, but we may mention it as a suspicion which we have long entertained, that Bertha did not sleep very well that night.

CHAPTER VI.

In the first week of May a solitary horseman might have been seen not far from Hilderton, trotting along the road to Hebworth. His nose was not aquiline, neither was his forehead high, his countenance noble nor his stalwart limbs encased in armour, according to the usual habit of solitary horsemen at the commencement of chapters. On the contrary, his nether members were clad in trowsers of that remarkably elegant check, the oblongs of which do not exceed eight inches and a half by seven and a quarter.

His shirt front was sprinkled all over with pink bantams of surpassing symmetry, and his coat buttons represented the heads of dogs with various expressions, indicative of all the possible phases of the canine character.

The acute reader will probably have recognised an old acquaintance. Mr. Walker—for it was no other than that literary lawyer—was meditating a little call on his friends, the Highlows, and had ridden over from Stonecombe that morning.

Mrs. Highlow had been sitting at the window, knitting some woollen socks for her precocious son John, when she perceived Mr. Walker's approach, and came to the door to meet him.

"Oh dear me, Mr. Walker, sir!" said that lady, "why it's quite a cure for sore eyes to see you here. Dick, Dick, come look sharp and take Mr. Walker's horse. But what a pity; Joseph is not at home, and won't be home this hour or more."

"Never mind that, my dear Mrs. Highlow," said Mr. Walker, giving his horse to Dick, who

had just emerged from the stables; "never mind that. I have no very particular business with Mr. Highlow this morning, but it's a long time since I have seen his wife you know, and I can enjoy a little private chat with a lady as well as another, especially if she is good-looking."

"Oh, Mr. Walker! How can you, sir!" said Mrs. Highlow blushing, but not looking very angry. "Well, I suppose it is the way with all you gentlemen. But pray walk into the parlour. And what will you take after your ride?"

"Nothing, thank you, Mrs. Highlow; unless perhaps you had a glass of your very excellent home-brewed at hand."

Mrs. Highlow vanished, but soon re-appeared with a jug of the above mentioned beverage.

"Talk of Barclay and Perkins, indeed!" said Mr. Walker, after a long and refreshing draught. "Talk of Allsop and all the rest of them; there is nothing like Highlow's home-brewed to my taste, and that is a fact."

"You are very good to say so, sir—very good. But I am so sorry Joseph is not at home."

"I have come to pay you a visit, and not your husband to day, so it is just as agreeable to me to find you alone," said Mr. Walker with one of his most insinuating looks.

"Well Dick, what do you want?" said Mrs. Highlow to that individual, who had just appeared at the door.

"I only wanted to know, mum, if I am to take the saddle off, and give Mr. Walker's 'oss a feed of corn."

"Yes, Dick, do if you please, as I shall probably stay here an hour or two."

"Oh, Mr. Walker, it was very kind of you to send my John that be-youtiful book, Pope's Omer, or else Omer Pasha I think they call it. I believe he's been fighting with the Rooshans. John's been reading it ever so much, and says it's very fine reading indeed, only he can't well understand what it's all about."

"Why he is such a clever boy, is John, you know Mrs. Highlow, and knows all about Pope, and so I thought it was just the thing you would

like for him. He is quite a literary man already."

"Ah sir, it's a fine thing to be liritary, but it's in the family you see. Why there is my Joseph has read the Pilgrim's Progress a'most through, he has; and it's a big book too. But lor Mr. Walker, why I have hardly seen you since poor Sir Roderick's death! Great changes at the Abbey since you were here! It's very sad, very sad! We live in a wale of tears."

"A remarkably just sentiment!" replied Mr. Walker, shaking his head responsively. "Remarkably just! I don't know when I have heard it more finely expressed. By the bye, I think I heard something about a quarrel between Sir Roderick and his son, I mean his second son, Henry. But I didn't believe it. I dare say it was all a story."

"I wish it was, Mr. Walker, I do indeed, for he is a good pleasant-spoken gentleman as ever breathed, is Mr. Egerton. But it was dreadful at the last!"

"So there really was some truth in it!"

"I am afraid there was, sir," said Mrs. Highlow. "I know all about it," she continued, looking very mysterious, "but I must not speak such things out of the family."

"Quite right, quite right, Mrs. Highlow. But to tell you the truth, I am such a bosom friend of dear Henry's, that I am almost like one of the family; so you see you need have no secrets from me."

"Dear me, sir, are you so very intimate with Mr. Egerton?"

"Intimate! I should think so indeed. We are sworn friends, Mrs. Highlow. He would like me to live and die with him,—wants me to come to Hebworth for good and all. But I said to him, frankly, that my hanging out at Hebworth would lead to a change in all my habits. I can't do it, Harry (I always call him Harry), I can't do it, Harry, said I. My professional duties bind me to Stonecome, and my absence would plunge hundreds of confiding clients into the depth of misery. It is positively terrible

when I think of the numbers of parties who would be inevitably ruined without my professional assistance and advice. The responsibility is wearing me out. It is indeed." Here Mr. Walker covered his face with his handkerchief.

"It's very distressing, sir."

"It is indeed, Mrs. Highlow. I said to him, 'my dearest Harry, I am willing to make any sacrifice to friendship that you can reasonably expect, but duty before all things.' And I refused him, though it cut me to the heart."

"But then I wonder, sir, as you are his best friend that he did not tell you all about it hisself."

"It was too trying. When he saw my tears flow like—ehem—flow like—like a waterspout, he was quite overcome himself, and could not enter into details. But in his last letter to me, he said, dearest John, there are some things too agonizing to communicate to those who sympathize with us so deeply as you do with me, but yet I should wish you to know them. Ask

that dear, good Mrs. Highlow. She is an excellent creature, she will tell you all. I will shew you the letter," continued Mr. Walker fumbling in his pocket. "It is blistered all over with his tears. Now I think of it, there was a tear exactly on your name. Dear me! How unfortunate! I must have left it at home. Well, that *is* provoking; but never mind, I can bring it next time."

"Dear, good Mr. Henry," said Mrs. Highlow, with a slight sob; "he has always been very kind to me. And did he really say I was an excellent creature?"

"As surely, my dear Mrs. Highlow, as that I must have left the letter in the second right hand drawer of my writing table. And he said no more than the truth. It is as true as gospel, Mrs. Highlow. And so there was a bit of a quarrel between my dear friend Harry and his father?"

"Well, as Mr. Egerton wishes it, sir, and you are his dearest friend, I suppose I may tell you all about it."

"Of course you may. Indeed, it's only your duty, Mrs. Highlow."

"Well then, sir, my husband had heard that Mr. Egerton had been looking very sweet like upon two young ladies; Miss Campbell was one, and I think the name of the other was Miss Allen, but he wasn't quite sure. Now, thought Joseph, it's a very shocking thing for him to want to go and marry two at once, sir, and be had up afore the magistrates for digamy and what not, and so he thinks it his duty to give Sir Roderick a hint. But he thought he'd better break it out gradual like, and only tell him of one at a time; and so he first told Sir Roderick as he had heard that Mr. Egerton was always at Oakwood Hall, and riding with Miss Campbell, and he hoped Sir Roderick would excuse the liberty, but he wished Mr. Egerton had found the lady to his heart and such like, and Sir Roderick got very red and very angry, and told Joseph to mind his own business, and so Joseph never said a word about Miss Allen at all."

"And what happened then?"

"Why, sir, it wasn't more nor a week after that when Sir Roderick was took so bad all of a sudden, and Mr. Egerton was sent for; and then there was such a noise in Sir Roderick's room, and such a quarrelling, that Mrs. Oldworthy, that's the 'ousekeeper, sir, and a very nice woman, too, and she is godmother to my John, and Mrs. Oldworthy thought it her duty to the family to listen at the keyhole."

"Of course it was," said Mr. Walker, "and pray what did she hear?"

"She heard Sir Roderick ask Mr. Egerton to promise not to keep company with Miss Campbell, because if he was to walk through the picture gallery he wouldn't find a blot in the kitchen. Now the picture gallery ain't the way to the kitchen at all, and what he meant by that, or why the kitchen shouldn't be kep as clean if Miss Campbell were mistress at Hebworth, I'm sure I don't know, nor Mrs. Oldworthy neither."

"And what did Mr. Egerton say?" asked Mr. Walker, greatly interested.

"He said he wouldn't promise nothing of the

sort, and then Sir Roderick began to curse, so that Mrs. Oldworthy said it made her blood creep all over merely to hear him."

"And did not they make it up at last?"

"I believe they did just at last, but there was a precious to do the next day, just like the first."

"So Sir Roderick gave way did he?"

"Not he, sir, he wasn't the man to give way. No, he wrote a letter to—"

Mrs. Highlow stopped short.

"Well, my dear Mrs. Highlow, you were going to observe he wrote a letter."

"No, sir, I can't tell you about that letter to Mr. Campbell. It wouldn't be right, indeed it wouldn't."

"My dear Mrs. Highlow, you may tell anything to me you know. You forget that I am Harry's bosom friend. Ah, Harry, Harry! how my heart yearns towards you, when I hear of these painful scenes! It is too much for my feelings, it is positively too much," said Mr. Walker, covering his face with his hands, "my

nature is too sensitive. Dear me, how I wish I could find that last letter of his about you," he continued, fumbling in his pockets, "and the tear blister on your name too! But what did you say about the letter he wrote to Mr. Campbell?"

"Oh, then you knew it was to Mr. Campbell. Ah, I suppose Mr. Egerton told you that. Well then," continued Mrs. Highlow, "as you know so much, I suppose I must tell you all about it. The fact is, I—I—"

"Well? my dear Mrs. Highlow."

"The fact is, I—I've got the letter in that closet."

"That's interesting—very interesting, and how did you get it?"

"Directly after Sir Roderick was dead, Highlow, and all the other people belonging to Hebworth went in to see the body. Joseph loved Sir Roderick dearly, though Sir Roderick used to blow him up pretty sharp sometimes, and so when he was in the bedroom, he saw what he thought was a chance bit of Sir Roderick's hand-

writing a lying on the ground in a corner, and so, unbeknown to the others, he just picked it up, and put it in his pocket, as a kind of memorandum like of his master."

"I should like to see that letter very much, Mrs. Highlow. Will you be so kind as to shew it to me?"

Mrs. Highlow looked round rather anxiously, and then walked to the cupboard on tiptoe, as if she were afraid that some evil disposed persons were watching her. She took out a tea caddy, and having unlocked it, produced a piece of crumpled paper from beneath the sugar basin, and handed it to Mr. Walker, who read as follows:

"Sir Roderick Egerton presents his compliments to Mr. Campbell, and begs to inform him that no consideration shall ever induce him to give his consent to the marriage of his son with any daughter—"

"That's an interesting document," said Mr. Walker.

"You may well say that, sir."

"Very interesting," repeated Mr. Walker, as he quietly folded it up, and having pulled out his pocket book, was in the act of placing it in one of its innermost receptacles.

"Stop, Mr. Walker, sir, if you please," said Mrs. Highlow, clutching at the letter, with considerable energy. "I can't—"

"My dear Mrs. Highlow, say nothing about it," said Mr. Walker, maintaining his hold. "You won't offend me—you won't indeed—by making me a present of this little worthless scrap of paper. I'm not proud—not at all. No man can say that John Walker is proud; and I shall accept this little paper as a memorial of that lady who will always live in my remembrance as the most excellent, the most—"

"No, Mr. Walker, I can't indeed, sir," repeated Mrs. Highlow, still retaining her hold of the much coveted document between a muscular thumb, and a no less muscular forefinger. "No, sir, I can't indeed, sir. Oh, dear, oh, dear! if Joseph were only to know."

Mr. Walker was afraid lest the precious docu-

ment might be torn, and left the paper in Mrs. Highlow's hands.

"I must try another dodge," thought he to himself. "Dear me! What's that noise at the door?"

"It's only the wind in the key-hole, sir."

(Ah, Mr. Walker, little did you ween of the jealous pair of eyes on the other side of that same key-hole.)

"And pray, sir, why did you want so much to have that letter?"

"Merely, my dear Mrs. Highlow, as an autograph of Sir Roderick's."

"As a what, sir?"

"As an autograph, that means, as a specimen of Sir Roderick's handwriting. People's handwritings are called their autographs, you know."

"Dear me, what a funny name."

"It is indeed; and what is more, they are very ticklish things to have to do with. Do you know, Mrs. Highlow, I once got into a terrible mess through an autograph. I was very nearly shooting a man."

"Lor! sir, you don't say so. How shocking! Do tell me all about it."

"It all arose from a little misunderstanding with a young nobleman. In the first place, I must tell you that about two years ago I was courting a young lady at Diddleton, who used to collect autographs. Well, one morning as I was going to Lord Braywell's about the conveyance of Thistlegreen farm, whom should I meet in the park but young Lord Pugil. Now, as he had just been elected member for the county, I knew Julia would be particularly glad to get his autograph, for lords and members of parliament were what she valued most. So, thinks I to myself, now is the opportunity, and I went up and asked him for it."

"'What the deuce do you want with it?" said he, turning very red.

"'Why, my Lord,' said I, wishing to put him in a good temper, "why, my Lord, since the attention of the country has been attracted to your Lordship's striking talents in parliament

and elsewhere, your Lordship's autograph possesses a value for every—'

"'D——n your impudence,' said he. 'I will give you my autograph, and you can carry it home with you at once.'

"With these words he raised his cane, and the scene that followed was of such a painful character that I will not describe it at length. His conduct was really most disgraceful. I had not seen the papers that morning, and how on earth was I to know that he had been brought up before the magistrates the day before for threshing a policeman, and that the *Times* had had an article on the amusements of the aristocracy, in which his lordship had been rather roughly handled? I walked home, and thought at first of challenging him. Had I done so, I should have shot him dead on the spot. But I took pity on his youth, and in a moment of amiable weakness I only threatened him with an action for the assault, which however he compromised with a five pound note. I shall never regret it, Mrs. Highlow, for a noble action is its own

reward. Still, this little incident has strongly impressed on my mind that one may get into a terrible mess through an autograph. But suppose we change the subject. Dear me! What a terrible thing this proposed raising of the income tax is!"

"Are they really going to raise it, sir?"

"Going to raise it! I should think so. Government wants a great deal of money just now, and so the tax is to be raised to fifteen per cent. at least."

"Why, that's ruination, sir! I wonder Joseph never said a word about it."

"Of course he didn't, because he didn't know it. It is a great secret as yet, only known to very few besides the ministers, and perhaps I was wrong in speaking of it; but you may rely upon it as a fact. Ah, we may expect dreadful times, Mrs. Highlow, dreadful times! Taxes on tea and sugar to be raised enormously. Not even coarsest moist next winter under ninepence a pound. It's awful! Congou up to seven shillings before the autumn. But what exasperates

me most is the abominable clause in the new bill about bailiffs. Of course you have heard all about that though."

"No, indeed, sir, I havn't though," said Mrs. Highlow, thoroughly alarmed. "Why, what are they going to do with bailiffs?"

"After next Christmas, or—let me see, is not it Michaelmas?"

"Oh, dear! oh, dear! what after Michaelmas?"

"Every man that wants to be a bailiff must take out a license every year like a game license, and it's to cost £20. Think of that, Mrs. Highlow! In a free country like this that your Joseph should have to pay twenty pounds English money every year for a license. Why, it makes my blood boil with indignation! But the bill will pass as sure as fate."

"Why, Mr. Walker, we may as well go to the workus at once. We can't pay it, sir; we an't got it. Oh, dear! oh, dear!"

"And when I think of income tax fifteen per cent., tea at seven shillings, and then direct my

thoughts to that blessed babe of yours in the next room that has just begun to cry; when I think of these things, why I rejoice that at any rate there's the workhouse left, though they do say the children are half starved there. All prudent people are selling on the sly whatever they can lay their hands on. There's nothing like having something against a rainy day."

"There an't, indeed, sir," said Mrs. Highlow, looking round the room to see what she could best spare.

"By the way, Mrs. Highlow," said Mr. Walker, quickly, "a sudden thought strikes me. I wouldn't make the proposition to anybody else, but the thought of that pretty babe sucking her dear little thumbs for want of a crust, has quite unmanned me. I think perhaps, Mrs. Highlow," continued Mr. Walker, while taking out a five pound note, "I think that in my present mood I could almost bring myself to giving you that little trifle for that autograph of Sir Roderick's."

"Oh, dear, dear, Mr. Walker, how kind, how

very kind you are, sir! But really, I am afraid Joseph would be so angry if he knew—"

"No buts, no buts, Mrs. Highlow, please ma'am."

"I should much like to let you have it, sir, but you see I—"

"Now, my dear Mrs. Highlow, no buts I pray. I hate buts."

"Well then, sir, I can't do it indeed I can't."

"Of that, Mrs. Highlow," said Mr. Walker, opening the note, and displaying in all its beauty that pleasing promise to pay on the part of the Governor of the Bank of England, "of that, ma'am, you are of course the best judge. I only made the offer out of pure friendship to yourself, and the interest I take in that sweet baby."

Mr. Walker began to fold up the note with great deliberation.

"Stop, sir—dear me—I wish I knew," said Mrs. Highlow, regarding the note with great affection, "and are you sure, sir, the income tax is to be raised to fifteen per cent?"

"The question at the last Cabinet Council, Mrs. Highlow, was between fifteen and eighteen, but I still hope it may not exceed fifteen."

"Well, sir, you shall have the letter."

Mr. Walker pocketed the desired document, and handed Mrs. Highlow the banknote.

"You may be very glad you have got rid of it," said Mr. Walker, "for these sort of papers only get people into a mess."

"That's very true, sir; and so at first you really were thinking of challenging the gentleman?"

"Certainly. Either of challenging him or calling on him and throwing him out of the window."

"But he was a great man, sir, was he not? A grand lord I mean; something very high."

"That would make no difference," said Mr. Walker, looking conscious of his dignity as a man. "As for that, high or low, I should chuck him out of the window as soon as look at him."

"So you would chuck Highlow out of the

window as soon as look at him, would you!" exclaimed that gentleman bursting into the room.

"Mr. Highlow, Mr. Highlow! pray, sir, pray hear me, sir!" said Mr. Walker, retreating into a corner of the room in an agony of terror. "Indeed, sir, yon misunderstood me, sir!"

But the appeal was in vain. Mr. Highlow rushed at Mr. Walker, caught him up in his arms, and hurried to the open window. Mr. Walker kicked, and Mrs. Highlow wept; but her husband was in far too great a passion to heed it.

Unfortunately for Mr. Walker, the house stood on a slight eminence, so that the yard at the back was considerably lower than the ground in front of it, a little circumstance which contributed at once to the elevation of his person, and the depression of his spirits.

In another instant his body was actually yielding to that mysterious force, the attraction of gravitation, but it did not descend far. An iron hook in the wall, just below the window,

caught his nether garments exactly in the middle of one of the oblongs, and Mr. Walker was suspended in mid air.

"Make them of some very strong material, suitable for riding in," had been Mr. Walker's order to Messrs. Cabbage and Snip, of Bond Street; and out of justice to that firm we must add that the directions had been strictly attended to. But riding is a very different thing from hanging on a hook outside a window, an ordeal which few materials will stand. Mr. Walker's position may be described as one of painful suspense in every sense of the word. Krrr—krrr—krrr. "It's giving way," thought he. Krrrrr—plosh! And Mr. Walker found himself in the waterbutt below, leaving one square still dangling on the hook above, and hating butts worse than ever.

"An't you ashamed of yourself?" said Mr. Highlow, looking out of the window at his fallen foe; "an't you ashamed of yourself, you artificial seducer! you insinuous wiper!"

"I wish I had a wiper here," thought Mr. Walker, "for I'm very wet."

"Yes, insinuous wiper, sir! That's my word. Bringing Pope's Omers into the buzzoms of families, and what not besides."

"Pray help me out, Mr. Highlow. Pray do sir. I shall catch cold, indeed I shall."

"Oh, Jo-Jo Joseph, how ker-ker-could you?" sobbed Mrs. Highlow; "and he the ki-ki-kindest, plea-pleasantest—"

"Oh, yes, of course, I'll help you out, I will," exclaimed Mr. Highlow. "You willan you."

"Why, de-e-ear, Mr. Highlow, what have I done, sir," gasped Mr. Walker faintly, with his teeth chattering, and his spirits damped, as well as his clothes, by the moist nature of his situation. "The wa-a-ater is ve-e-ery co-o-old. Wha-a-a-t have I do-o-ne?"

"What have you done? Why, didn't you say quite open afore Dick that you was glad I wasn't at home, 'cause Mrs. Highlow is good-looking? And didn't Dick tell me as soon as I

got home, and havn't I heard through the key-hole, you rascal! how you called her your dearest Harrot, and said you'd make any sacrifices; and didn't I see her give you a letter; and didn't you give her a fi-pun-note; and didn't she call you her dear Mr. Walker; and didn't she say she didn't know what I should say; and didn't you say you'd chuck Highlow out of the winder, you hypercritical, inweigling willan you?"

"Oh, de-e-ear Mrs. Highlow, pra-a-ay ta-a-a-ke me ou-ou-out, I am so co-o-o-old."

"Why, there you're at it again afore my very eyes, you unconscionable wiper! I'll take you out, that I will, and wipe you down and warm you with my oaken towel till you are as dry as a bone. That's what I will."

With these words Mr. Highlow retired from the window, leaving Mr. Walker in a divided state of feeling. The water-butt was cold, but still it was preferable to the warmth alluded to by the enemy.

"Oh, Joe," sobbed Mrs. Highlow, "Mr. Walk-Walker has only go-go-got Sir Rode-rode-roro-

rickk's let-let-letter, for which he very ki-ki-kindly gave me a fi-fi-fi'pun note, because he is Mr. Egerton's best friend; and he ca-ca-calls him his dear Harry, and you thought he said Harrot; and he said if a gentleman were t-t-to insult him he would throw him out of the window, whether he were high or low."

A light broke in on Mr. Highlow's brain. He offered at that moment an interesting confirmation of the theory advanced by the author of the Night Thoughts. He was about forty, and he evidently suspected himself a fool. Perhaps we might add, that as far as the highly intellectual character of his features would permit, their expression appeared to indicate that his suspicions were not entirely without foundation.

"And so Mr. Walker is Mr. Egerton's best friend!"

"He is his bos—bos—bosom friend, and I am a poor ill-treated woman, as might have had Tib—Tib—Tibbles, who has bought the house with the green vrandah and forecourt, and there's that blessed child crying. Ah, I wish it had

been a Tib—Tib—Tibbles—I do—I do—I do, and had a fore—forecourt, and a new mang—mangle, like Mrs. Tibbles."

"Now don't say that, Harrot, and I will go and help Mr. Walker out of the butt."

But when Mr. Highlow appeared below, and prepared to assist Mr. Walker, that gentleman, remembering a little allusion to an oaken towel, appeared anxious to decline the proffered aid.

"Now please, Mr. Highlow, sir, are you sure, quite sure that there is not a shade of resentment in your mind, sir; because if so I would rather stay here till I have quite satisfied you. It is rather co-o-old to be sure, but ve-e-ery refreshing." (Mr. Walker's teeth were chattering like a locomotive). "Yes, ve-e-ery refreshing, and I should much prefer setting your mi-i-ind quite at rest before I—"

"Harrot's put it all to rights, Mr. Walker."

Hope sprang up afresh in Mr. Walker's mind; but remembering that caution is a professional man's first duty, he peeped over the edge of the

water butt, to observe whether Mr. Highlow had any weapon concealed behind him. Not seeing any, he began to think that a peace might be concluded on a lasting and substantial basis. Still Mr. Highlow's composure might only be a *ruse de guerre*, and he therefore determined to sound that gentleman's sentiments still further.

"You feel quite sure then, Mr. Highlow, that there is no danger of your present amicable feelings undergoing any change when you see me out of the—"

"Lor, Mr. Walker, what's the good of all this palaver? There, catch hold—so—steady, that's it—now, Harrot, just catch hold of t'other leg, that's it."

And Mr. Walker was extracted from his involuntary bath, and landed in safety on terra firma.

"Why what a mess you are in to be sure, sir. And a whole square out too. Well I never!"

Mr. Highlow's eye had caught the fragment alluded to playing gracefully in the wind from the hook above.

"It's always the way with those autographs," said Mr. Walker, "they always get a man into a mess."

"So it seems, sir. Now, Harrot, you run up stairs, look out my Sunday togs, make a bit of fire, and mix a glass of rum and water directly."

Mr. Highlow helped Mr. Walker up stairs, who left a stream of water behind him as he proceeded.

"Oh, Joe," said Mrs. Highlow, returning from another room, "your Sundays have gone to be mended, so I have brought these."

Mr. Walker looked up, and shuddered involuntarily as he perceived a velveteen shooting jacket, a red waistcoat, and a pair of corduroy knees. Making, however, a virtue of necessity, he said nothing, but retired to another apartment to change his dress, thus completely verifying his prediction, uttered an hour before, "that if he was to hang out at Hebworth, it might lead to a change in all his habits."

A quarter of an hour afterwards, Mr. Walker

was sitting over the fire in the above mentioned garments, and sipping the hot rum and water with considerable satisfaction, when the door opened and in walked Mr. Nixon.

"I wanted to speak to you, Highlow, about the sad state that fence is in, just between—Why Mr. Walker! is that you? I did not recognize you at first."

Mr. Walker looked up, then glanced down at his corduroy shorts and grey stockings, and for a moment appeared embarrassed. This, however, was never more than a very transient state of mind with that gentleman, and he answered with tolerable composure:

"Good morning, Mr. Nixon." Then turning towards the window, he exclaimed: "What, soldiers at Hebworth! What can they want here?"

Mr. Nixon looked out of the window to see a phenomenon at that time so very unusual in that part of the country. The instant his back was turned, Mr. Walker made some very rapid telegraphic signs to Mr. Highlow, first pointing

to his own costume and then to Mr. Nixon. Mr. Highlow thought at first that Mr. Walker's cold bath had brought on a temporary aberration of intellect, and was just going to speak, when Mr. Walker placed his fingers on his mouth, and intimated his most earnest desire that the bailiff would maintain silence.

A slight glimmer of this idea had just begun to illuminate the bailiff's mind, when Mr. Nixon returned from the window, and observed that he could see no soldiers.

"Ah, perhaps I was mistaken," said Mr. Walker. "I thought for an instant I caught sight of a few red coats. I don't know what it can have been, I'm sure. I daresay you are surprised, Mr. Nixon, to see me in this plight, but the fact is I have had a most wonderful escape—most providential!"

Mr. Walker shook his head, and looked very solemn.

"Why, what has happened, Mr. Walker?"

"Riding over to see Mr. Highlow, I th ought I would take a short cut across Hilderton Heath.

Being deeply interested in a little mathematical problem about the—the—about the strength of materials, I forgot the deep pool, and rode slap into it. I was off my horse in an instant and out of my depth. Highlow came by at the moment, and, with wonderful presence of mind, dashed in, pulled me out, and saved my life. Ah!" continued Mr. Walker, with a look of the most fervent gratitude and intense admiration, "I shall never forget the noble disinterestedness with which that man risked his life to save mine, and then lent me these—these—ehem!"

Mr. Walker here glanced at his inexpressibles, and then shook Mr. Highlow very heartily by the hand, contriving at the same time to nudge his meaning into the bailiff, who passively submitted to all these various manipulations with a look of stolid surprise.

Mr. Walker was necessitated to spend the rest of the afternoon at Hebworth, as it required a few hours before his garments were sufficiently dry to allow Mrs. Highlow to sew in the failing square.

Two days afterwards the county paper contained the following paragraph:

"PROVIDENTIAL ESCAPE, AND WONDERFUL INSTANCE OF PRESENCE OF MIND.—On Tuesday last, as Mr. Walker, the highly respected attorney of Stonecombe, was riding across Hilderton Heath, deeply absorbed in one of those scientific problems to which that gentleman is well known to devote so much of his leisure, he forgot the precise position of Hilderton pool, and rode into it. He became disengaged from his horse, and being borne down by the weight of his dress, had already sunk three times, when Mr. Highlow, Sir William Egerton's bailiff, came to his assistance. With a courage and self-devotion beyond all praise, Mr. Highlow plunged into the water, and having dived four times in different parts of the pool, at length succeeded in bringing Mr. Walker to land. Life appeared at first extinct, but after several hours, animation was at length restored, and Mr. Walker has already returned to his

professional duties, without suffering any further inconvenience than a slight cold. He has expressed it to be his intention to present Mr. Highlow with a silver snuff-box, as a slight token of his profound gratitude for the courage with which that gentleman has saved him from a watery grave."

Mr. Highlow did really receive a silver(plated) snuff-box, with suitable inscription, expressive of his gratitude, from Mr. Walker, and has repeated the affecting incident, as related above, so often, and with such circumstantial details, that we are convinced that he really believes it, and that he regards certain vague recollections of a water-butt as the disjointed fragments of a dream.

Occasionally, however, he has been seen to contemplate the hook under the window, and the water-butt beneath it, with great gravity for several minutes, and then to shake his head with a puzzled air, as if he doubted "whether such things were as he did talk about." Fortunately

the sight of the snuff-box has always re-assured him, and after such little intervals of scepticism he has generally recounted the adventure at Hilderton pool with more than his usual graphic power.

CHAPTER VII.

It was a beautiful morning in the beginning of May, the morning, indeed, of the very day which, as we have seen in the last chapter, proved so eventful for Mr. Walker. The family had assembled at the breakfast table at Oakwood, and Bertha was engaged in making the tea. Mr. Campbell was reading a fulminating article in the "Diurnal Intelligence," directed against that dreadful contemporary, the "Present Period," and, therefore, did not observe the little nervousness in Mary's manner, or the little flurry, accom-

panied by an unusual tendency to blushing in Bertha.

At last Mary finished her cup of tea, by way of a cordial, and having coughed a little to break the oppressive silence, commenced with a tone of affected ease, which she was far from feeling:—

"By the bye, Papa, have you heard the news?'

"Certainly, dear, or rather I have just been reading it here. It seems quite confirmed that Austria has really sent General Count Stringemup to Lombardy. The "Present Period" had a most disgraceful article about it, yesterday, but the "Intelligence" shews it up nicely this morning. I see, moreover, that it has had a considerable effect upon 'change,' and that Consols have fallen five-eighths. Upon my word, that "Period" is a most abominably inconsistent—'

"No, Papa, I don't mean that. I was alluding to the new arrival that—'

"Oh, I beg your pardon! You are speaking of the Arch-Duke's arrival at Mivart's, but I

don't attach much importance to it. I don't see how any propositions that he can have to make to our government, respecting the Principalities, can be of such a character as to affect our policy towards Austria, because you see—'

"No, papa," said Mary, interrupting her father somewhat nervously, "I meant that Mr. Egerton is coming to Stonecombe."

"Oh, indeed," said Mr. Campbell, somewhat stiffly. "But what has that to do with the Arch-Duke? He is not an Arch-Duke, I suppose?"

"No, papa, I never said anything about the Archduke."

"How can you be so absurd, Mary! Why it is not a minute since you asked me if I had heard of his arrival at Mivart's! Well, well! I suppose we must make some allowances for you now that Herbert has only just come back. So Mr. Egerton is coming to Stonecombe, is he? Where did you hear that?"

"Herbert told us yesterday."

"Did Herbert invite him?"

"Yes, papa, and he is going to stay some little time with him."

"You seem to take a great interest in him, Mary. If I were Mr. Egerton I should feel very much flattered."

"He is Herbert's most intimate friend," said Mary, in a deprecating tone.

"Even if he is," replied Mr. Campbell, "I think Herbert would have shewn better taste if he had not asked him to Stonecombe, especially just after our return to Oakwood. You both know, I believe, what I think of his conduct, and I hope you will behave accordingly."

"But, papa, Herbert could hardly do otherwise, because Mr. Egerton wanted to be invited."

"Indeed," said Mr. Campbell, raising his eyes from the paper. "Bertha! Bertha! Look! The urn—quick! The water is running all over the table."

Bertha looked in the direction indicated, and perceived that while attending to her father and sister, she had forgotten to turn the cock, and

that the boiling liquid had not only completely filled the teapot, but was now meandering in various directions between the tea cups and slop basin. She immediately rectified her mistake by cutting off the supply, while Mary rang the bell for the servant.

"How very careless!" said Bertha blushing, but not altogether sorry for the interruption to the previous conversation.

"It will be all the better for our nerves," said Mary. "But, papa," she continued, after a short interval, "I hope you don't think there has been anything so very wrong about Mr. Egerton's conduct, because I am sure it will admit of an explanation."

"Most unprincipled," muttered Mr. Campbell, who was again absorbed in the "Diurnal Intelligence."

"Unprincipled!" exclaimed Mary, with something in her tone almost approaching indignation.

"Yes, Mary, unprincipled, most unprincipled. Do you not call it unprincipled to take money

for writing in the interest of the enemies of your country? And although I confess it has never been proved, I almost begin to believe in the story of Russian gold."

Mary was dumbfounded.

"Why, papa, I never heard that Mr. Egerton ever wrote in the newspapers at all; and that he has ever been bribed I neither can nor will believe."

"Why, how your head seems to run upon Mr. Egerton, Mary! I was speaking of the "Present Period." I shall soon begin to think that Herbert has some cause for jealousy after all."

Bertha made Mary a little sign that it was better not to renew the conversation, and the rest of the meal was passed in silence.

After breakfast, when Bertha had retired to her own room, Mary told her that she meant to go into the town.

"But," she added, with a meaning smile, "I shall not ask you to accompany me, as I dare say you would prefer a walk to the Solitude."

"Thank you, Mary," said Bertha, endeavouring to ignore her sister's insinuation. "I intend to stay at home this morning and paint."

She tried to look grave and unconscious, but somehow or other she could not quite succeed. She felt too happy, and both sisters laughed in concert.

"You don't think papa is very much irritated against Mr. Egerton, do you, Mary?"

"No, Bertha. Besides which, the cause may be so easily removed. Papa thought that he paid you great attentions last summer, and he certainly was not singular in that opinion. Now, although I only dropped out the least little bit of a hint in the world to Ellen,—it was only one evening while she was doing my hair, and under the strictest confidence,—somehow it seems to have come round to papa that a very interesting scene took place at the Solitude last summer. I think it must have been through Uncle Edward. Perhaps he is not very wrong in that either; but then Mr. Egerton's long absence has made him think that he is like the

knight in the song, who 'loves and he rides away.' But then you see, Bertha, if he rides back again, I don't think papa can make any objections to him. Even if he should come in a gig, Bertha, I still think the paternal sanction may be obtained."

"I think so too," said Bertha laughing, "but still I wish it were already evening, and all settled."

"Oh, Bertha! Why then all the best of it may be over. But if you are not too nervous to be left alone, I shall start now on my expedition. You see I cannot well play daisy picker in the house, and I might be *de trop*. But shall I fetch you the sal volatile or another pocket-handkerchief before I go? They might be useful in case of a fainting fit or tears, you know."

Mary did not wait for an answer, but ran out of the room, leaving her sister to her pleasant meditations. Bertha took up her palette and tried to paint, but without her usual success. The fact, however, may perhaps admit of some

explanation on psychological grounds, as it really is difficult to produce a cold Ruysdael-looking forest on the canvass, when one has a sunny beach, a blue sea, and a little bench between lofty rocks in one's mental vision.

After pretending to paint for rather more than an hour, but really doing nothing, Bertha began to grow tired of such a fatiguing operation, and looked at her watch. It was nearly eleven o'clock.

"In the country," she said to herself, "people do pay early visits sometimes, especially on business."

She looked ont of the window, but there was nothing to be seen except Evans in the paddock at a distance, with a corn sieve before him, and a treacherous halter behind him, trying to inveigle old Brown Bess into his power.

"I think I will take a turn in the garden," she said to herself. "I want some fresh air, and am doing no good here. I am afraid I shall have to paint out again what little I have done."

Bertha walked in the direction of the Labyrinth, but not to the part she most generally frequented. Some inexplicable motive made her prefer a small corner of it which commanded a view of the lodge and abutted upon the drive. Here she paced up and down one of the least beautiful walks in the whole of the grounds, when suddenly she heard the repeated clinking of the latch of the lodge gate as it swung to and fro on its hinges before settling in its usual state of rest. She turned her head, and saw Egerton who had just passed the lodge. Her cheek flushed and her heart beat quick. She commenced walking towards him at a rapid pace, but had hardly proceeded half a dozen paces before she paused, not feeling sure whether her little ambuscade might seem quite maidenly. But the doubt came too late. Egerton's eyes had been immediately attracted by a small portion of a lady's dress, and he was already hurrying towards the path which led into the Labyrinth. She again continued to advance towards him, but much more slowly than before. Perhaps she

preferred the Labyrinth to the drive as a place of meeting.

"Thank God, at last!" exclaimed Egerton, as he took both her hands in his.

Bertha made no answer, but there was a tell-tale tear in either eye as she returned the pressure of his hand, which spoke a language far more eloquent than words. Each gazed into the other's face for one short instant, and each read that their faith had not been rashly given. Egerton saw she was his own,—perhaps even more his own than when they last had parted. She did not try to conceal it, nor could she have done so had she tried. Her deep woman's love spoke out of her dark eyes,—he saw what she must have suffered in his absence, and, almost, felt a pang of self-reproach for having given the promise which was to part them so long. He drew her to a neighbouring bench, pressed her to his heart, and kissed away her tears. She submitted passively to his caresses, for her heart was far too full for the pettinesses of coquetry, and she was above affecting a reserve she did not feel.

"Thank you, Bertha, for your faith. I have deserved it."

"I have never doubted," she replied, "though perhaps I did think at one time that when your journey to Italy was put off, you would have managed to find a few leisure days for Stonecombe."

An involuntary expression of pain passed over Egerton's features, as her words reminded him of the painful cause of his protracted absence.

Bertha instantly perceived it, and continued:—

"But now you are here, Henry, we will only enjoy the present and the future. My faith were poor indeed if I did not believe you had good reasons for your tour in Germany."

"You only do me justice. I hate secrets where they can be avoided, and hope I may never have another from you. There were circumstances, however, connected with my father's death, which made it seem advisable that I should act as I did, and, unfortunately, they were of such a character that I could not impart them to

any one,—no, not even to you or Herbert. But of this I can assure you; that never for one instant have I ceased to feel as deeply all I felt and expressed when that sad message hurried me away from Oakwood. You believe me, Bertha, do you not?"

"You know I do," she said.

"Sometimes, when I was abroad, a horrid fear came over me that perhaps I might be putting your faith to too severe a trial,—that you might think I had spoken lightly what I had lightly felt, and that the first startling event had rudely awakened me from a mere passing dream. I could hardly have blamed you, Bertha, had you done so, for appearances were much against me. Such thoughts were fraught with an agony I cannot recall without a shudder. But then came the recollection of the depth and earnestness of your nature, and with it the conviction that you would not withdraw the love I valued more than all else on earth, without knowing that I had ceased to deserve it."

"I am afraid that was no merit of mine," said Bertha.

"Why not?" replied Egerton, a little anxiously.

"Because—because perhaps I could not have done so had I wished it," she answered.

"But you never wished it, Bertha, did you?"

"Never," she replied, placing her hand in his. "Every moment of your absence has only made me feel more deeply that all my happiness on earth is centred in the hope of one day being your wife. With God's aid, I will be a right loving wife too. My father may forbid my giving you my hand, but there is something else which I have given you, and which is yours for ever."

"Do you think there is any danger, dearest, that he will oppose our union?"

"Had I entertained any serious fears of that," said Bertha, "I should never have made so frank a confession. With all his good qualities, papa is sometimes irritable, and something

may have occurred to annoy him. But when I remember how highly he esteemed you, and how warmly he felt your generous conduct towards Herbert last summer on more than one occasion, I feel sure that as soon as he sees you again, his old feelings will return, and that he will gladly welcome you to Oakwood?"

"But as your lover, Bertha?"

"My father will not sacrifice his daughter to a passing humour. If he were to— but do not let us sadden our first meeting, Henry, with such forebodings."

"I feel very much inclined to go to him directly, and put an end to all suspense."

"He is not at home at present, but he will return to luncheon, and then—"

"I shall have no very splendid home to offer you, Bertha. I fear you will have to make many sacrifices when you become my wife."

"If I were not afraid you would think me too romantic," she answered, smiling, "I should say that such sacrifices for those we love are no sacrifices at all. Nay, more, I am tired of luxu-

ries; there is something monotonous and wearisome in having all one's wants supplied at once. I long for the excitement of a little managing and self-denial, and am sure it will do me far more good than if you could give me all the carriages and horses in the world. So never feel anxious on that account. I shall only want to pay a visit to Oakwood now and then; I mean when you can come too, Henry."

"And then you know we can visit 'The Solitude.'"

"Shall we go there now?"

She placed her arm in his, and a few minutes afterwards they found themselves at the scene of the happiest as well as the unhappiest moments either had ever known.

As Bertha had foretold, Mr. Campbell returned to luncheon. She watched her father's manner towards Egerton with considerable anxiety, and was very happy when she observed that though a little stiff at first, he soon resumed the old friendly tone of the preceding summer. Egerton was decidedly absent, but

with the exception of taking powdered sugar to his Stilton, instead of salt, contrived to conduct himself without any striking breach of propriety. Mary, perhaps, was the least natural of the whole party. Her spirits were fluttered, and she could not altogether conceal the consciousness that some event of more than usual importance was in progress.

After luncheon, Egerton requested the favour of a private audience of Mr. Campbell, which was immediately granted. Mary returned to the drawing-room, where she endeavoured to read the last new novel. But the actual romance going on around her was so far the more interesting of the two, that she soon threw down the volume in despair of being able to fix her attention upon it, and passed the remainder of the interval of suspense in wondering what her father would say. Bertha had retired to her own boudoir, having previously enjoined on Mary to let her know the instant she heard Egerton leave her father's study.

Half-an-hour had elapsed and Mary had not

heard the study door open, although she had listened very attentively. "What a long time papa takes about it!" said she to herself. "I could have settled it all and made everybody happy in a quarter of the time. I am afraid he must be making all sorts of objections. Ah! there is the study bell." She placed the door ajar, and through the opening saw tall Thomas proceed to answer the summons as slowly and leisurely as if he were walking at a funeral. "What a phlegmatic temperament Thomas must have to be sure," thought Mary; "he has never been in love, that's certain." Thomas passed the door again and proceeded as leisurely as before to Miss Campbell's boudoir. In another instant Bertha appeared and walked towards her father's study.

"Papa has sent for me," she said hurriedly to Mary, who had now opened the door and was standing in the passage. In another instant she found herself in the presence of her father and her lover.

"Can you guess, Bertha, what I want to

speak to you about?" said Mr. Campbell with a quiet smile.

Bertha blushed, but made no other reply.

"Mr. Egerton appears tired of his bachelor liberty," he continued, "and has asked me to give him a wife. What do you think about it? Do you think he could make a young lady happy?"

To this question Bertha smiled as well as blushed, for she saw that the dreaded interview had come to a satisfactory conclusion.

"Well," said Mr. Campbell, "if you will not tell me your opinion of him I suppose that silence gives consent. There!" he continued taking Bertha's hand and placing it in Egerton's, "take her, and make her as happy as she deserves to be. She has been a good daughter and will be a good wife. But now get away with you, for I hate billing and cooing you know."

Bertha kissed her father and left the room with Egerton. We have strong reasons for believing that as soon as they were outside the door, Egerton went through a similar ceremony

with Bertha. At any rate Mary's joyous laugh was heard in the passage the instant after, and as she afterwards stated to Herbert in confidence, it was in consequence of her having seen something which made her heart feel very light.

The next few days were very bright ones for all the party assembled at Oakwood. The happiness of the lovers may be left to the imagination of all who either have been, or hope to be, in a similar situation. Herbert and Mary were happy on their own account as well as in the deep sympathy they felt with the happiness of their friend and sister. Mr. Campbell had also good reasons for satisfaction. He had bestowed his daughter on a man whom he thoroughly esteemed, and who did not appear the less desirable as a son-in-law for being the heir presumptive to a baronetcy and eight thousand a year.

CHAPTER VIII.

A FEW days after the events above recorded, Bertha strolled out one morning directly after breakfast, and directed her steps towards the bench by the oaks, intending to read Tennyson, till Egerton's arrival. Though few poets were oftener in her hands, he did not seem to rivet her attention so entirely as in former times, and she often laid the volume down for the purpose of enjoying her own thoughts. She might have been engaged in this manner for about an hour, when on looking up she suddenly perceived a gentleman approaching her.

The first glance showed her that it was *not* Egerton, and the second that it *was* Mr. Walker, got up moreover in a very elaborate manner, and quite regardless of expense. His white trousers would have made fresh snow look grey in comparison, and the little toes of his French polished boots appearing from underneath them, were like black Koh-i-nors, only more brilliant. The upper part of his person consisted principally of studs, waistcoats, chains, collars, eyeglasses, and auburn curls, crowned with a white hat, inclined at about the same angle as the Tower of Pisa. The whole effect was decidedly increased by a pair of spurs and a riding whip, the latter of which was more especially useful for tapping playfully and unconsciously against the Koh-i-nors, and thus attracting attention to their brilliancy and lustre.

"Good morning, Miss Campbell," said Mr. Walker, taking a seat on the bench beside her.

"Good morning, Mr. Walker."

"I have been wishing for several days to pay

my respects at the Hall, but my professional avocations, combined with a bad cold in the head have compelled me to forego that pleasure. Ah, that cold! I have had a most narrow escape with my life, Miss Campbell, and may think myself fortunate to have come off with nothing worse than a cold."

"Indeed!" said Bertha, "have you met with an accident?"

Mr. Walker shook his head mournfully.

"I nearly lost my life," he said; "but what is life after all? What, I would ask, is life to a party situated like myself? Life is but a desert waste, a howling wilderness, a—a—"

"But how did it happen, Mr. Walker?"

"I was riding across a howling wilder—I beg your pardon, I mean Hilderton Heath, deeply engaged in a mathematical calculation, and little thinking of the deep pool near the gravel pit, when suddenly I rode into—ehem—when suddenly I heard the voice of distress. 'Help me, save me, or I perish!' were the sounds that caught my ear. I hurried to the spot, and just

saw the top of a man's head sinking for the third time beneath the ruthless flood. Ah," continued Mr. Walker, with a slight shudder, "the recollection of that moment is too dreadful! I sprang from my horse, plunged into the pool, but could not find the object of my search. I rose again to the surface for air. Again I dived, and again my efforts were fruitless. A third attempt was equally unsuccessful; but the fourth! think of my ecstasy, Miss Campbell, when the fourth time, after groping about the bottom of the pool, my hand came in contact with a human nose, and I succeeded in dragging out the apparently lifeless body of a human being. The usual remedies were applied, and animation was at length restored, and—and—"

Mr. Walker pressed his handkerchief to his face.

"And what, Mr. Walker?"

"And I returned home, went to bed, took some gruel with a little brandy in it, and am now only suffering from the effects of a severe catarrh, and the overwrought feelings of a too sensitive nature."

It was with great difficulty that Bertha suppressed a smile.

"I do believe she is laughing at me again," thought Mr. Walker.

"If you have such a bad cold, Mr. Walker, I should have thought you had better not make it worse by sitting in the open air."

"Thank you, Miss Campbell, for your kind consideration, but this beautiful scene revives my shattered nerves. Not but what I enjoy the quiet seclusion of my own delightful residence. I think you have never seen it,—I mean its interior. Have you?"

"No," said Bertha, a little surprised at the question.

"Ah! It is a capital house. I bought the freehold a bargain. Title quite unimpeachable. Quite unincumbered. Two drawing rooms to the street, twenty-three by seventeen, and sixteen by seventeen. Office below, on one side, dining room on the other, fourteen rooms altogether, exclusive of servants' offices. Coach-house, stabling for four horses, and a pump of

the most excellent water, admirably adapted for culinary purposes, in the yard. In short a highly desirable family residence."

"So I should think," said Bertha.

"And, then," continued Mr. Walker, with a look of the most touching tenderness, "if I had a family, and any of the children were ill in the night,—measles for instance,—why there's Dr. Freeman, just opposite. And the view of Dr. Freeman's poplars, and the chirping of the sparrows in the trees in the yard,— all these things afford a soothing solace to an intense lover of nature like myself. But still," continued Mr. Walker, in a deeper tone, "but still the thought will often come over me, what is all this worth, if I have none to share it with me? What is life, I would ask, to any party who has not tasted the sweets of connubial bliss? A desert waste! A howling wilderness!"

"By Jove, she is silent," thought Mr. Walker, "she must be softening."

"Excuse me, Miss Campbell, but when I think what that desirable residence now is, and

then picture to my imagination what it might be, if shared by another, the contrast is too great for my feelings, and I say to myself, 'be a man, John Walker, take courage, put an end to an inward struggle under which even your strength must at length succumb; speak openly to her who is your destiny, lay your heart at your idol's feet!' Oh, Miss Campbell, believe me, I have long been conscious of the deep sympathies that intertwine our souls like—like —like the lilac and the oak, and never! (here Mr. Walker fell on his knees) never, will I rise till I have heard my doom from my lilac's lips!"

"Don't be silly, Mr. Walker! Pray get up, sir, at once," said Bertha, moving to the further end of the bench. But Mr. Walker was not to be answered so easily, and followed her, walking on his knees all the way.

"Oh, Miss Campbell! I will settle the whole of that desirable freehold on yourself, with a joint power—"

"Are you mad, Mr. Walker? Get up directly."

"You see before you, Miss Campbell a blighted rosebud, a desolate being whose hopes are crushed, to whom existence will be a burthen from henceforth, and the world a howling wilderness without a single harbour of refuge for my weary wandering spirit. And yet, if you reject my most ardent aspirations, there will still be memories—fond memories that will beautify the desert past! Have you never bought a pot of Atkinson's, Miss Campbell? Have you never accidentally swept that pot from that sanctuary of beauty, your toilet table, and have you not then perceived the stunning truth of the words of the poet—

'You may break, you may ruin the vase if you will,
But the scent of pomade will hang over it still.'

Such a shattered vase shall I become, Miss Campbell, if you reject my suit. My heart will be broken, but treasured memories will cling to it just as the scent I have now mentioned does to—to—to that ruined vessel. Grant me hope, Miss Campbell, oh grant me hope, which, like a

green oasis in the desert of my destiny, may afford the nourishment necessary to this blighted rose bud to put forth its tendrils and become a—a—a sturdy oak, a—ehem."

"Mr. Egerton!" said Bertha, as she rose from her seat.

The words acted like an electric shock on that blighted bud, who immediately sprang to his feet and looked extremely uncomfortable. As Egerton approached, Mr. Walker cast an imploring look at Bertha, who had considerable difficulty in restraining her laughter. Egerton perceived her merriment and divined its cause.

"Good morning, Mr. Walker. I see by the paper that you got a ducking the other day, and that Highlow pulled you out. Mrs. Highlow said something about a waterbutt? You are none the worse for it, I hope?"

"Only a bad cold," replied the bud, feeling more blighted than ever by the allusion.

"But dear me!" continued Egerton gravely, looking at Mr. Walker's whites; "I am afraid you must have had a fall?"

Mr. Walker looked down, and discovered to his intense horror two broad green marks on his nether garments, betraying his recent position.

"I have been looking for something," muttered Mr. Walker in a low tone.

"For what?" said Egerton, who had not heard very distinctly.

"I have been looking for—for a shattered vase," said Mr. Walker, to whose somewhat confused thoughts no other object presented itself. "Good morning, Mr. Egerton; good morning, Miss Campbell;" with these words the vase walked away, dangling his bandana before him to conceal as much as possible the damaging effects of the peculiar mode of locomotion he had so recently adopted. Reader! Take warning! If you mean to make an offer out of doors, do not put on white trowsers.

CHAPTER IX.

ABOUT a fortnight after the events above recorded Bertha came of age. Various plans were proposed for celebrating such a great occasion with becoming solemnity. Mary suggested a fête in the park for all the juvenile inhabitants of Stonecombe, but this idea met with rather faint approbation from Bertha, who dreaded any interruption to the quiet happiness she was enjoying, from all the bustle of preparation. At length it was settled that the day itself should be devoted to a little excursion to Stony Combe,

and that Mary's fête should be given in the course of the summer.

The day at length arrived. Egerton made his appearance soon after breakfast, and leading Bertha into the recess of one of the windows, produced a small case containing a bracelet, which he placed upon her arm. It was his first gift.

The sky was grey and cloudy, and in the early part of the morning a little anxiety was felt lest the weather should interfere with the intended expedition. Towards twelve o'clock, however, the sun burst forth, and gave every promise of a fine afternoon. The carriage was ordered, and Thomas having stowed away a large hamper in the dickey, the party took their places and drove off.

It was very pleasant to wander among the rocks in that wild ravine. All the party were very happy, though they showed it in different ways. Mary found likenesses to her friends in the profiles of the various crags they passed. One, she said, was exactly like Mr. Egerton, only hand-

somer; so flattering, indeed, that she had hesitated to mention it at first, lest she should encourage his vanity. Egerton replied that Mary took an unfair advantage of him, as she was well aware that it was quite impossible to find any object in the whole circle of art or nature that could ever be a flattering likeness of herself.

Bertha seemed amused at this little warfare between Egerton and her sister, but did not take any active part in it.

After having partaken of the contents of the hamper, and drunk Bertha's health in champagne, they started for another stroll. The two pair of lovers, however, soon parted by tacit consent, and Herbert and Mary took one direction, while Egerton and Bertha took another.

"You have never told me, Henry," said Bertha, "what it was that you and papa talked about during that eventful half hour."

"Why, Bertha, after a little poetical introduction on my part, suitable to such a subject, and a few complimentary phrases on his about the esteem he felt for the character of your humble

servant (in which, by the way, he has shewn a penetration that does him honour), he began, as I suppose all papas do on such occasions, to ask what my income and expectations might be. I was obliged to confess at once that I had no very splendid rent roll to show—that, in short, my present income consisted of nothing more than the interest of a few thousand pounds. You know, Bertha, my father had intended to give me the Chesham Wood farm, but his illness came on very suddenly, and he never made the necessary codicil to his will."

"And what did papa say to that?"

"He asked me if I intended to go into any profession, or if I had any other prospects of increasing my income. I then told him what you already know, that Lord Windworth had volunteered to procure me a place in the Home Office, if I wished it, and that I had accepted his offer. The salary at first will be very small, but I think we may manage to live."

"And then," said Bertha, "I have three thousand pounds of my own, so we shall get on capitally."

"Your father mentioned that too. And then he asked me if I had received any accounts of my brother lately. I could see at once what was passing in his mind, and it was a very natural question for him to put, but it would have been very shocking to my feelings to rest my cause in any way upon the possibility of such a sad event. So I told him that my brother was still detained at Rome by bad health, but I earnestly hoped he might recover. Then thinking it better to be quite open, although any allusion to the subject was very painful to me, I begged him not to allow any contingencies to enter into his estimate of my position and prospects. I said I could not offer you the same luxuries to which you had been accustomed, but that I believed you attached less importance to them than most women do, and that I would do all in my power to render you happy."

Bertha said nothing; but a little additional pressure of a fair hand on his arm seemed to thank him for that promise, and to shew at least that she was very happy then.

"And what did papa say to that?"

"He seemed to approve of my not wishing to calculate on the future, and did not allude again to my poor brother. He told me that although the income I had mentioned was decidedly small, yet he attached far more importance to character; and that believing your happiness would be safe in my hands, he should feel it his duty not to withhold his consent. I, of course, had no objection to offer to such sensible views, and so the matter was settled. I cannot say that I am absolutely the most wretched of human beings in consequence, neither a blighted rose bud, nor a shattered pot of Atkinson's best."

"And then it was, I suppose," said Bertha, smiling, "that papa sent for me."

"By no means, Bertha. He had a most important communication to make first. He said that it was his intention to settle on us some land and other property, to about the value of twelve thousand pounds, on our marriage, and added that after his death he should divide every thing equally between yourself and Mary. I thanked him for what I consider a very hand-

some settlement, and then he rang the bell and sent for you."

"That was very kind of my father," said Bertha, "and I think we need not feel at all anxious about our worldly prospects."

"I think so too," replied Egerton, "but still we shall have to live in some plebeian terrace with a garden behind the house about thirty feet square. But what does that signify, dearest. I think we could manage to love each other, even in High Holborn, could we not?"

"I would try," said Bertha laughing, "but I should decidedly prefer a less noisy situation. Shall you have much writing to do at home?"

"Not as a part of my official business, but I hope to write a good deal all the same. If there is one article of my creed, Bertha," continued Egerton in a more earnest tone, "if there is one article of my creed which I hold to more than another, it is this: that every man according to his circumstances and ability, should seek for some sphere of action by which to better his fellow creatures, either morally or physically, in-

dependently of his mere bread-earning occupation. Now in my own case I have not had to seek long. There are numberless social evils taking their root in absurd exploded social dogmas, quite out of all proportion to the progress which the age has made in other things. Look at the rapid strides with which physical science has reached a height quite undreamt of a few years past, and then look at the narrow selfish spirit of many of our customs and institutions! Take for instance the attempts made, more especially in later times, to compel people to be religious by Acts of Parliament; to drive the poor into the churches on Sunday by securing that they shall have no enjoyment any where else. The rich, indeed, can have their friends to dinner on other days, but there is no enactment against Sunday dinner parties, and I believe they are rather in favour in high places. The poor man has but one holiday, and that one is surely intended for rest and recreation as well as worship; and yet, wherever bigotry can lay its hand upon him, down it comes in its puri-

tanical narrowness, and in the name of religion, closes the door to all intellectual and social enjoyment. The only effect will be to embitter men's minds against what is holiest, and to destroy the deep religious spirit which pervades the English nation. However, I merely mention this as one crying evil, but there are many similar ones. A single individual may not be able to do much, but I cannot live a quiet easy self-seeking life, while I know that such things are, and not raise my voice against them. I may never see the result of my labour, but if I work in faith, I believe it will not be without some result eventually. Be that as it may, Bertha, to think of all the numerous ways in which, on this fair earth that God has given us, man destroys the happiness of his fellows by encroaching on their freedom, and insisting on making them good according to his own narrow conceptions, to think of these things, Bertha, always makes me so sad and so indignant, that not to utter my protest in some form or other is quite impossible. To-day, however," continued

Egerton smiling, "I mean to banish all such thoughts and see nothing but *couleur de rose*. But it was only fair to let you know what a restless radical of a husband you are going to have."

"Had you been otherwise than you are," said Bertha, "perhaps you would never have been my husband at all, for I believe it was those very qualities which led to your being a radical, or something like it, which first excited an interest in me. Your radicalism is so different from papa's. I have often agreed with many things he has said, and yet I have not liked the spirit in which he said them. His radicalism seems to be in a great measure inspired by wounded personal feeling, whereas your radicalism is only the form assumed by your love of mankind and your indignation at injustice. He does not avow as much, but I believe he feels the very existence of an aristocratic class as a standing insult; whereas you only want that class to be less of aristocrats in order to be more of men."

"That is certainly my wish," said Egerton,

"as far as my radicalism applies to the mere question of classes. The aristocratic conception of human sympathies, I mean human in general, as opposed to the personal feelings arising from relationship, appears to be comprised in the barter of soup, blankets, and an occasional speech or even lecture, against an unlimited amount of respect and obedience. Now, what the middle and working classes want is a little more justice, and a little more acknowledgment of their political rights, and a little less of this very condescending liberality and kindness. A blanket is, no doubt, an excellent thing, and so is a hundredweight of coals; but the right of voting for the county or the borough, exercised without intimidation, is a still better thing It will lead eventually to a less frequent necessity of receiving such alms, and will tend to raise the poor man's moral position as well as his physical, by enabling him to regard himself as more of a citizen and less of a serf. But here are Herbert and Mary; I suppose it is time to be thinking of our return."

"Not just yet," said Mary, "it is so very beautiful. Let us at least sit down for a few minutes under this rock."

"Not there," said Herbert quickly, "anywhere rather than there."

Mary cast an inquiring glance at Herbert, who grew rather red, and then said to her in an undertone:

"That rock, Mary, is associated in my memory with most humiliating recollections. You will probably recollect a certain solitary walk which I took to Stony Combe last summer. I shall never forget all that passed through my mind as I leant against that rock. What a fool I was to be sure!"

Here Herbert felt a strong inclination to convince himself of the difference of his two visits to that romantic spot, and gave Mary a—well, never mind what Herbert gave Mary. It is no concern of yours, reader, nor of ours either, but it was loud enough to make Egerton look round and Bertha smile. Egerton said he could hardly have believed such a thing of a sixteenth

wrangler! Oystershell bonnets had not then been formally introduced, but Mary's was pushed back so far over her head, as to look almost like an anticipation of that most convenient fashion.

In compliance with Herbert's wishes another spot was found, and after they had rested themselves a few minutes, the whole party proceeded to the place where the carriage was waiting, and drove back to Oakwood. They arrived just in time to dress for dinner.

Upon assembling in the drawing room, Mr. Campbell and his brother appeared more than usually grave, but they received Egerton with marked kindness. Before proceeding to the dining room the Vicar took his son aside and whispered a few words which seemed to interest him greatly, but their purport was not communicated to the rest of the party. During dinner the conversation turned principally upon Stony Combe and its various points of beauty, and in the course of it the Vicar explained some of the geological peculiarities of the neighbourhood,

and exposed most successfully a ludicrous blunder which Professor Sandstone had made on the occasion of his last visit.

As soon as the ladies had retired to the drawing room, Mr. Edward Campbell hurried off Herbert to the garden. Egerton was on the point of following them, but Mr. Campbell begged him to remain, as he had something to say to him.

As soon as they were alone, Mr. Campbell said:

"I am afraid, my dear Henry, that I have some melancholy news for you. As you have been enjoying a pleasant day at Stony Combe, I did not wish to shock you with it in the first instant of your return, and therefore hope you will pardon me for not having given you this letter till after dinner. I see by the post mark that it comes from Italy, and the black seal has led me to fear the worst."

With these words he placed a rather bulky letter in Egerton's hands.

Did the arrival of that packet seem to you so very melancholy, Mr. Campbell? We rather

think not, sir. We rather think you were already contemplating Bertha presiding at Hebworth as Lady Egerton, and that, radical as you were, the picture you were drawing in your imagination was not of a highly distressing character.

Egerton hurried to the window, and having torn off the envelope, discovered a short letter from Mr. Robertson, and a much longer document in his brother's handwriting, consisting of several sheets. He read Mr. Robertson's letter first.

"It is as you conjectured," said Egerton; "my poor brother died on the 14th instant without pain. He sank so rapidly at the last, that Robertson had no time to write me word that the end was approaching, before all was over. And I never saw him after all! Oh! that I had disregarded his wishes and gone to Italy. I ought to have known it was the whim of an invalid to insist on my waiting till we could meet in England. There is the letter," he continued, handing it to Mr. Campbell.

Egerton turned away. He sat down near the window, and covering his face with his hands, leant his head on the back of the chair, and sobbed violently.

Mr. Campbell read the letter, which ran as follows:

"Rome, May 14, 184—.

"My dear Sir,

"It is my melancholy duty to inform you that your dear brother died this morning at about twenty minutes past ten o'clock. The state of his health for the last two years must have prepared you in a great measure for this sad event, but still the final parting from one so dear, must be severely felt by all who knew him and were able to appreciate his thoroughly amiable character. It would be impertinent in me to attempt to offer you any consolation under so heavy an affliction, but I trust that God will give you strength to bear it with fortitude, and that time will mitigate its poignancy.

"Sir William had been feeling rather better during the last few weeks, and looked forward with great pleasure to his return to England. Only two days before his death he gave some orders relative to the preparations for his journey. Yesterday morning he rose at his usual hour, and after breakfast took a short turn with me in the garden. He had not, however, been out more than ten minutes, when he complained of feeling unwell and returned to the house. I got him to bed as quickly as possible, and sent immediately for his medical adviser. But, alas! it was only too evident that he was beyond the reach of human aid. He continued to sink rapidly during the day and succeeding night, and expired this morning so gently that it was difficult to determine the precise moment of his death.

"Sir William slept a great part of the last day, but as long as he was awake he retained the perfect possession of his faculties. His last words were to the effect, that he hoped you would forgive whatever might appear like a

want of openness in his conduct, and not think unkindly of his memory. The accompanying paper, in his own hand, will explain the subject to which he referred. I shall write again to you about it in the course of a few days.

"Begging to assure you of my sincere sympathy in your bereavement,

"I remain, dear Sir,

"Yours very truly,

"SAMUEL ROBERTSON."

As soon as Mr. Campbell had finished reading the letter, he went up to Egerton, and said, with a good deal of kindness in his manner, "I never knew your brother, Henry, but I have often heard him very highly spoken of, and can imagine what your feelings must be at this sudden and painful intelligence. I dare say you would like to be alone for a little while, and I will therefore leave you for the present. Do not join the party at tea, if you do not feel equal to it. You know you are one of the family now, and need not treat us with any ceremony."

"Thank you, sir," said Egerton, much moved by Mr. Campbell's consideration. "I should like to be alone for a short time, but if perhaps Bertha could join me in a few minutes—"

"I will send her to you," said Mr. Campbell, as he left the room.

For a few minutes Egerton abandoned himself to his grief, which was not quite unmingled with self-reproaches for having allowed his brother to die comparatively alone. Presently he felt a light hand upon his shoulder, and looking up, saw Bertha's face wet with tears. Neither of them spoke; neither of them indeed could have spoken at first, but words were not necessary to tell him the fullness of her sympathy. She felt his thanks in the pressure of his hand, and never had their hearts been so near in their mutual joy as they now were in this their first grief.

The mere fact that his brother William, his old playmate and schoolfellow, was now dead, had so entirely engrossed Egerton's feelings that he did not hurry to the perusal of the paper accompanying Mr. Robertson's letter with the

same eagerness as he would have done under other circumstances. He anticipated nothing beyond an explanation of the reasons which had made him prefer their meeting in England, and perhaps a few directions respecting his last wishes not contained in his will. When, however, Bertha was summoned to the tea-table, he sent his apologies to the rest of the party, and returned to the Vicarage with the intention of reading the somewhat lengthy enclosure, in the quiet and solitude of his own chamber.

Egerton's absence and its melancholy cause had thrown a certain gloom over the rest of the party, and they separated for the night at an unusually early hour. Mr. Campbell perhaps was not very sorry for this, as he longed to be left to the uninterrupted enjoyment of his own thoughts.

"Bertha never saw Sir William in her life," said Mr. Campbell to himself, "and yet she seems to feel his death just as if it had been that of an old friend. Curious! Very curious. She must be thoroughly in love, that's clear, or she would have hardly fo[illegible]so entirely the other side of the

picture. I don't believe that Egerton has given a thought to his new position; not a thought! It really would seem as if Hebworth and the baronetcy had no value whatever in his eyes, for although he has not seen his brother for years, I never knew a man so thoroughly cut up. Had it been any one else I should have suspected that he was either a fool or a hypocrite. But I am sure it is genuine in his case, and that he would gladly be a younger brother again if he could bring Sir William to life by it. He is a thoroughly good fellow, there is no doubt of that, but not over worldly wise. I shall have to look after Sir Henry a little, for if I do not, he is quite weak enough to fool away half his money on schools and Mechanics' Institutes, and such things. Thank Heaven! I have now got a new footing for my radicalism. It was very easy for Lord Botherton and all that confounded clique to pooh pooh my politics as quite natural in a rich plebeian. Lord Botherton too! a man of yesterday! Why, the Egerton baronetcy is the oldest in the county. The fools may talk about the rich

plebeian if they like, but he will be father-in-law to a man whose ancestors had been baronets for more than a century, when Lord Botherton's grandfather was a solicitor at Hilderton. I should not be much surprised if some of them try to ride the high horse with Bertha too. But I don't think Sir Henry is the man to stand much of that sort of nonsense; and for that matter, Bertha too can hold her own. Perhaps they may go on the other tack, and condescend to regard the Campbells as an old county family. Hang their condescension; they shall find me the same as ever."

CHAPTER X.

As soon as Egerton had reached his room, he threw himself into an arm-chair, and began to read Mr. Robertson's enclosure. The first part was addressed to Sir Roderick, during whose life it had been written. It ran as follows:

"My Dear Father,

"I hope that several letters may still pass between us, but before these lines meet your eye I shall be no more. I am well aware that my days are fast drawing to a close, and that in all probability I shall never see another

winter. Two years ago I could have contemplated the approach of death with comparative equanimity, but I confess now my heart is very heavy. When you have read the following lines you will know all the causes of the terrible anxiety which is preying upon my spirits and hurrying me to the grave. One of them is the fear lest you should think unkindly of me after I am gone. Oh, my dear father! I may have acted wrongly, I may have been weak, but I have been sorely tempted. Try not to curse my memory. Try to place yourself in my situation, and to forgive my solitary act of disobedience. I know that you will entirely disapprove my conduct, and perhaps still more its concealment. But my strength is going, and I am so utterly wretched, that I feel I cannot brook your resentment. Perhaps, were I to live the last two years over again, I should choose a somewhat different course. I will not deceive you. I believe I should still commit the one act which will draw down your anger, but instead of concealing it from you, I should

endeavour to obtain your forgiveness while it was yet time. Now, however, I must trust to the hope that my death will soften your feelings, and that you will treat my memory with greater leniency than you would have accorded to myself. My mental sufferings indeed during the last few months have been greater than I can describe, and will, I hope, be regarded by you as some expiation of my error, if it really be one; I cannot say of my sin, for, except as an act of disobedience to yourself, I believe in my heart it will not be regarded as such in the eye of God.

"It is now just two years since I first arrived in Rome, and took up my quarters in furnished apartments on the second floor of a house in the Via Babuina. My landlord, Pietro Righetti, was a carver and gilder. He had formerly been able to earn a respectable livelihood by his trade, and had contrived to give his only daughter, Lucia, a better education than usually falls to

the lot of persons in that station. A few years previously, however, to my becoming his tenant, he had met with a severe accident which greatly injured his health. While carrying a heavy picture frame to the atelier of a young artist, his foot slipped, and he fell to the bottom of a lofty flight of stairs with the frame upon him. Two of his ribs were broken by the concussion, and he received internal injuries of a very serious character, for from that time his health was completely undermined, and he was quite unable to pursue his occupation for more than a few hours in the day.

"The loss of health was speedily followed by the loss of business. Artists who had reckoned on having their orders punctually executed by a certain time, would find them not even commenced, and accordingly transferred their custom to younger and abler hands. His wife was still an active woman, and endeavoured to increase their slender income by letting lodgings. Sometimes, however, this resource would fail them, and shortly before my arrival in Rome they had

been obliged to borrow money at a most usurious rate of interest to prevent the sale of their furniture.

"As all my wants were attended to by my own servant, I hardly saw anything of my landlord or his family till accident brought us together. On one occasion, in the absence of Robert, Madame Righetti answered the bell. I saw she had been crying, and inquired into the cause of her distress. She told me briefly the circumstances related above, and I gave her a little pecuniary aid, sufficient to relieve her from her immediate embarrassment. There was a certain honesty and simplicity in her manner while describing her own and her husband's misfortunes, which impressed me very favorably, and I determined on instituting a few inquiries into the truth of her story, and rendering the family some further assistance if I found her statement correct. The result was most satisfactory. I found the Righettis spoken of by all who knew anything about them in terms of high respect, and my only remaining difficulty was to hit

upon the best means of rescuing them permanently from their unfortunate position.

"Shortly after this, I was sitting in my room one morning, pondering over several plans, but dissatisfied with all of them, when suddenly I heard loud voices in angry discussion in the Righetti's apartment. Fearing lest they might have got into some fresh trouble, I hastened to their door, and knocked for admittance. No attention was paid to my summons, which, in all probability, no one heard, and as the noise grew louder, I ventured to open the door without waiting for permission. I shall never forget the scene which met my eyes as I entered that room. In the first place there was the hoary old rogue of a usurer loudly insisting on the immediate payment of his claims. Then there was a handsome young artist engaged in a very animated conversation with Lucia Righetti, sometimes using a tone of entreaty, at other times that of menace, if she would not comply with his request. Then there was Lucia Righetti herself, with her long black hair streaming down her

back, and her dark eyes darting glances of indignant scorn at her persecutor, but evidently refusing to listen to his suit, whatever that might be. Then there was Madame Righetti, crying as if her heart would break, sometimes addressing the usurer, and sometimes the artist in a tone of supplication, and sometimes appealing to her daughter Lucia in a tone of earnest remonstrance. Pietro Righetti himself was sitting in a corner of the room with a vague, listless air, and apparently quite stupefied with the weight of his misery. My sudden entrance caused a slight interruption to the dispute; but it was only of short duration, for the next minute all the contending parties began to address me at once, and in such rapid and passionate language, that I could hardly understand one word of what they said. With some difficulty I succeeded at last in eliciting the facts of the case. It then appeared that a certain sum which the Righettis owed the old usurer had become due on that day, and that he threatened, in case of non-payment, to take their furniture in execution. Lucia,

who was extremely beautiful, had once sat as a model to the artist, but had most unhesitatingly refused to sit again for another picture, in which she was to have figured as a heathen goddess, or something of a similar nature. The artist had called to renew his request only a few minutes after the usurer, and had offered to pay the latter's demand on condition that she would accede to his wishes. It was quite clear to me that there had been a previous understanding between the artist and the usurer, and that their meeting was by no means accidental. Madame Righetti in the extremity of her need had joined the artist in entreating Lucia to comply, but to this she had offered the most indignant refusal. My course was simple enough. I immediately paid the old rogue's demand, and told the artist to leave the room. He assailed me with a volley of abuse, and appeared at first disinclined to obey; but upon a hint that if he made any further difficulty I should send my servant for the police, he thought better of it and retired.

"From this time I saw a good deal of the Righettis. Through my acquaintance among the artists I succeeded in obtaining for Pietro at least as much work as he could execute. But this did not last long. His health had been so thoroughly undermined by his accident and the troubles it had brought in its train, that he died about three months after the events above recorded, leaving his widow and daughter entirely destitute of any means of support.

"One of the first plans that suggested itself to my mind for assisting the Righettis, was to obtain a situation for Lucia as nursery governess in some respectable family. I felt, however, an indescribable dislike to introducing her to any of my friends, and satisfied my conscience for my delay in doing so, with the shallow pretext that I must first make myself better acquainted with her character and abilities. It was with this object that I asked her if she would sit to me for her portrait. She willingly acceded, and the sittings commenced.

* * * *

"Since writing the above, I have had a slight relapse. I cannot proceed with my story with the same minuteness with which I commenced it. I have not the strength to do so. I know that every word of what follows will call up in your mind the most violent feelings of resentment and indignation. I seem to have your image before me as I write, and to hear your curse on him who—but no, I cannot describe my conduct in any words that would suit your view of it.

"Day after day were those sittings repeated. I soon felt what a flimsy excuse they were for our meetings, especially as my art as a painter was but small, and after the first week the easel was allowed to remain undisturbed in its corner. But our meetings continued all the same, we read Italian poets together, and to hear Dante's verse come rolling forth in her rich voice, and to see her eyes flash and her bosom heave at passages of unusual grandeur,—these were things I had never pictured to myself even in dreams. I loved her,—loved her with an intensity of passion of

which I had never before believed my calm nature capable. She returned my love with all the fervour of an Italian. I then had hopes that I might live, especially if I remained in a southern climate, but I felt that I would rather die—yes, my dear father, I deliberately repeat it—I felt that I would rather die than part from Lucia, or hurt a hair of her head.

"I informed Robertson of the truth, but under a solemn pledge of secrecy. The fact is, I was afraid lest accident might lead him to discover what was going on, in which case he would have felt at liberty to report it to you, and so I made him my confidant for the purpose of securing his silence. He remonstrated, but without effect. All I would consent to was to leave Rome for one fortnight, and take a trip to Naples. You will now understand our motives for that journey, which undertaken, as it was, in the middle of winter surprised you so much at the time. The days spent on that journey and the few succeeding them were as near an approach to purgatory as anything I have ever experienced. Robertson

was constantly painting in the most vivid colours the indignation and resentment with which you would regard the act I contemplated. I could get hardly any sleep at night, and when I did sleep for an hour or two, your image haunted me in my dreams. If I looked into the world for comfort in my wretchedness, I saw pity, contempt, and obloquy. If I thought of you, I seemed to hear you curse me for mingling our ancient blood with that of one so far beneath me in station. Three days after we had arrived at Naples I was in a fever. Poor Robertson! As I learnt afterwards, he was thoroughly frightened; for he then saw that my health was not equal to the intense excitement occasioned by his harping incessantly upon so painful a theme. I recovered at last and returned to Rome. Lucia had just lost her mother who only survived her husband three months. I shall never forget Lucia's rapture when she saw me again, for she had feared that Robertson had prevailed on me to desert her for ever.

* * * *

"Lucia is now mine—mine for ever! Oh, my father, if you only knew what a deep grand nature hers is, you would feel that the truest nobility is not that of blood. How she has watched over me in my illness! May God reward her!

"Another year, and I shall have passed away to that haven of rest where distinctions of rank are unknown. A few more years, and you, my father, will have followed me. You will then look down on these paltry artificial barriers which divide men's hearts during their earthly pilgrimage, as vain and foolish. I implore you in the name of Him in whose presence we shall both meet ere long, try to anticipate those truer and juster views, and do not allow my innocent wife to suffer from the resentment with which you will regard my error—if it really be one! Remember that she will have watched by the death bed and closed the eyes of your son. She has just told me of expectations that under other circumstances would have made us both very happy, but I much doubt whether I shall ever

live to be a father. Oh, do not abandon her to want and misery! Take her to your heart, my dear father, as the most precious legacy of your unhappy son! The thought of what she may yet have to suffer, if you leave her to the tender mercies of a cold unfeeling world, almost drives me mad.

* * * *

"And so my father is dead! He died blessing me, and little thinking that that blessing would sound in my ears more like a reproach. How kind he was with all his sternness! Now he knows my error, but then perhaps he does not regard it as such. But the concealment! Ah, there is the sting! Would that I had had but the courage to tell him all! Thank God, my Lucia is at least saved from want!"

"My Dear Henry,—

"To you must I address the remainder of this sad story. I am looking forward to

Lucia's confinement about the middle of November, and shall return to England as soon as she can travel. If she present me with a son it will materially affect your future position, and I cannot find the courage to tell you everything till that is settled. If it should be a daughter, your interests will not suffer much by my marriage. I hardly know which to hope. I know at any rate that you will never think harshly of me. Be kind, Henry, to Lucia and to my child when I am gone, for they will both sadly want a protector.

* * * *

"Thank God, I am a father, and Lucia is safe. But you, Henry! Ah, you little know the cloud that hangs over your future, and I, coward that I am, cannot write the words that might cast a gloom over our last interview. In the spring we shall meet if I live so long, and when you see my Lucia, Henry, and my boy, I think your generous nature will forgive my

weakness. I yearn for the meeting, and yet sometimes I dread it even more.

* * * *

"Still at Rome! Another month and I shall see dear Hebworth again, and ask my father's forgiveness at his grave. My first act shall be to do all in my power to atone to you for the disappointment of your worldly expectations. You shall have all but Hebworth as soon as the necessary deeds can be prepared. There is enough for both of us. God bless you! I wish our first meeting were over, and that I had already received your forgiveness for not having been more open. I shall not add any more to this, but shall send it to you a few days before my arrival in England. But whenever or however we may meet, I shall always remain, my dear Henry,

"Your very affectionate brother,

"WILLIAM EGERTON."

When Egerton had finished reading the foregoing paper, he leant back in his chair and abandoned himself to his reflections on this most unexpected change in his position. He would have been more than human if his first feelings had not been tinged with something like disappointment. Not that there was a shade of resentment in his mind against the memory of his poor brother. His own experiences of the preceding year had enabled him to sympathize most entirely with every part of that brother's conduct, except its want of openness, and for this he readily found excuses in his brother's delicate health and constitutional timidity. But to find himself suddenly deprived of the position and means which had seemed almost within his grasp, and which would have enabled him to carry out many a long cherished plan, could not be otherwise than a severe blow, and as such, in the first instance he undoubtedly felt it. To the strong, however, all things are sources of strength, and before half an hour had elapsed, he began to look on his altered prospects from a higher point

of view, and to regard them rather as gain than as loss in the true estimate of the life that lay before him. Had he been the baronet, amply provided with this world's goods, with perhaps a seat in Parliament, and a completely ascertained standing in society, his career would have seemed too easy, and he would have had no part in the most earnest scenes of that great struggle that makes men noble and strong. Now, on the other hand, he had to depend on himself alone for what he was to be and to do; and the mere recollection of this fact braced up all the energies of his soul, and made him conscious of a greater strength than he had known before. A short prayer—but a prayer as earnest as it was short—that God would aid him in the coming strife, would not allow his former aspirations at a useful life to be swallowed up and rendered abortive by the struggle for the mere means of life itself, was followed by a calm faith and a holy peace, in comparison with which the advantages of wealth and station were poor and pitiful indeed. Had not God already granted him the

greatest boon that man can ask, the deep attachment of an earnest loving woman! Possessed of such an overflowing source of sympathy for the nourishment of his affections, conscious of a strength of will and intellect that might be fairly meted against that of most of his fellows, and above all, resting on a profound faith that all things work together for good—it was not the loss of the world's toys or the world's favour that could make him waver in his onward course.

CHAPTER XI.

THE next morning Egerton rose rather earlier than usual, and after a short turn in the garden placed himself at his desk for the purpose of answering Mr. Robertson's letter, and enquiring for further particulars respecting his sister-in-law and infant nephew. After he had been employed in this manner for about an hour, he heard a knock at the door.

"Come in," said Egerton.

"Please, S'enry," said Brady, a little embarrassed as she entered the room, "master is down, and breakfast is ready."

"Please what?" replied Egerton.

"Oh, sir,I meant no offence, I am sure, but I said please, S'enry, sir. Leastways Evans was here last night, and said we were all to call you S'enry, sir, and that Miss Campbell would be my Lady, sir, and that—"

"Evans made a mistake, Brady. I am not Sir Henry, nor am I ever likely to be."

"I beg your pardon, sir, I am sure, but—"

"Tell Mr. Campbell, Brady, I shall be down directly."

Egerton finished the sentence he was writing, and then repaired to the breakfast parlour.

"I hope you have slept well," said the Vicar.

"Thank you," replied Egerton, "I slept pretty well, but I did not go to bed very early. The sad intelligence from Italy has given me a great deal to think about."

"That I can easily imagine. But sad as such an event must always be, I should think you were in a great measure prepared for it." Then turning to Brady, who had just entered the room, he continued, "Tell Herbert that Sir Henry has

come down, and that we are waiting breakfast for him."

Brady looked at first a little astonished, and then casting a rather comical glance of triumph at Egerton, left the room, muttering between her teeth:

"I was sure he was S'enry after all, though he didn't know it hisself."

"I see, my dear sir," said Egerton, "that you are labouring under a very natural but false impression that I have succeeded to the baronetcy. Such, however, is not the case; my brother has left a son."

"Left a son! Why I never knew he had been married."

"No more did I till yesterday evening. From some papers which accompanied Mr. Robertson's letter, but which I did not read in the first instance, it appears that he married an Italian about a year ago, and that he has left a widow and one son, who must now be about six months old."

"Dear me! How extraordinary you should never have heard of it."

"According to my brother's account, Lady Egerton must be a very superior person, but her family held a rather inferior station in society, and from motives that may easily be conceived, my brother kept his marriage a secret. I am writing to Mr. Robertson to-day, for the purpose of learning a little about her plans, for considering his future position as master of Hebworth, I think my nephew ought to be educated in England."

"Hebworth too!" ejaculated the Vicar in a low voice.

Here Herbert entered the room. Egerton mentioned briefly the news he had just communicated to the Vicar. Herbert seemed a good deal astonished but said very little, and the conversation turned upon general topics.

As soon as breakfast was over, Egerton walked over to Oakwood to communicate the general purport of his brother's letter. He met Bertha a little distance from the house. Taking her arm in his, and looking very gravely in her face, he said:

"I hope, Bertha, you have not set your heart upon being Lady Egerton."

"Why do you ask?" said Bertha anxiously and turning very pale.

She had quite mistaken the purport of his words.

"Because," said Egerton, feeling in his turn a little annoyed at the importance she appeared to attach to the title, "because, if so, you are doomed to be disappointed."

"Then God have mercy on me!" exclaimed Bertha passionately, and hastily withdrawing her arm from his.

"Why, Bertha," said Egerton, "you astonish me. I never thought that you would have valued rank so highly."

"Rank!" she replied indignantly. "I have never valued rank at more than its real worth. But when you tell me thus suddenly and with so much composure, that I am to forget all that has passed between us, that I am no longer to you what I have been, can you expect that I should listen calmly and quietly, and—why, what have

I done to offend you? How could I believe that the instant you have succeeded to the rank you deem I treasured so highly—"

"Bertha, dearest Bertha, you misunderstand me. I have merely told you that I neither am Sir Henry Egerton, nor am likely ever to have that title, and cannot therefore make you Lady Egerton. But my wife I still hope to make you, and that before very long, unless, at least, you have changed your mind."

"Is that what you meant, Henry?" said Bertha blushing, and again placing her arm in his. "It was very foolish of me to misunderstand you, but—"

"But you thought the new baronet was getting proud, and meant to play you false. Oh, Bertha, Bertha!" he continued, in a tone of gentle reproach, "how could you have so little faith?" Then seeing her look of entreaty, he added, "But I hope, dearest, we may never have any misunderstanding more difficult to be cleared up than this, and then we shall not live the most wretched life conceivable, whether you

rejoice in the title of Lady, or simply Mrs. Egerton."

"I wish for no other title than that of your wife," said Bertha, smiling through her tears. "But what has happened to prevent your succeeding to the barontcy? Was the intelligence false?" she added quickly, "and is your brother still alive?"

Egerton shook his head gravely, and then gave her a hasty sketch of the contents of Sir William's letter. She seemed far more interested in the story of Lucia, than disappointed by its influence on her and Egerton's prospects.

"If *you* don't care about it, Henry," she said "I am sure *I* don't—no, not the least in the world."

"I *did* care yesterday," he answered "for about the duration of twenty minutes, but not more. A very little reflection made me feel that it was a question between a higher rank and a higher life, and as soon as I saw *that*, I rejoiced most honestly that my fate had determined for the latter. But I must now go to your father,

and tell him all about it, or he will be calling me Sir Henry before the servants, and it is just as well to avoid such mistakes."

Egerton found Mr. Campbell alone in his study, with a large box full of deeds and law papers before him, and apparently engaged in searching for some document.

"Good morning, my dear Henry," said Mr. Campbell, as Egerton entered the room, "or, after the sad intelligence of yesterday, I suppose I should rather say my dear Sir Henry. Well, well, we must resign ourselves to the decrees of Heaven in these cases. Sir William's death must be a sad blow, but we should always remember that whatever is, is best."

"I quite agree with you, Mr. Campbell, but on one point I must correct you; I am not Sir Henry."

"You are not Sir Henry!" exclaimed Mr. Campbell, looking up from the deed box, and almost startled out of his philosophical resignation.

"My brother married more than a year ago,

and has left an infant son, who, of course, succeeds to the baronetcy."

Mr. Campbell was by no means deficient in presence of mind, but on this occasion it was put to an unusually severe trial. The surprise had been too great, and the expression of his countenance betrayed in an instant the extent of his disappointment.

"Why, it is a regul ar swindle," thought Mr. Campbell to himself. "Still I must be cautious and not do or say anything hastily."

"But, my dear Henry," he replied, in a tone in which there was a slight admixture of reproach, "you never mentioned to me before that he was even married, much less that he had an heir."

"Because I never knew it till last night," replied Egerton. "You will remember that the packet contained, besides Robertson's letter, another paper, which I did not read till after I had returned to the Vicarage. This proved to be a letter from my brother, partly addressed to my

father, and partly to myself, explaining the circumstances which had induced him to marry, and also to keep his marriage secret. He has left a widow and one son. Lady Egerton is an Italian by birth, and her father held a rather inferior station, which is the reason that prevented my brother from informing me before of the step he had taken."

"But perhaps the marriage is not valid!" said Mr. Campbell hastily; "perhaps we can prove the child to be illegitimate."

"Heaven forbid!" exclaimed Egerton, rather indignantly.

"Oh, of course, of course, my dear Henry, it would be a most lamentable thing. I was only thinking that perhaps your poor brother might have been taken in by some artful, designing woman, and inveigled into a sham marriage, or something of that sort."

"I have every reason for believing, as well as hoping the contrary, Mr. Campbell."

"It is a very disagreeable business," thought Mr. Campbell to himself, "but I had better give

the matter a little reflection before entering upon any further conversation."

Then turning to Egerton, he continued aloud:

"This is very surprising intelligence, my dear Henry, and we will talk it over some future time. But you see, just at this moment, I am rather busy looking for an old deed, and must therefore beg you to excuse me."

Egerton took the hint, and left the room.

Did Mr. Campbell continue his search for the missing document? No, indeed he did not; he sat down in his easy chair, in order to consider at his leisure, whether any change in his domestic politics had become advisable under such untoward circumstances

"Hardly twelve hours have elapsed," said he to himself, "since I was picturing Bertha in my imagination as Lady Egerton, and mistress of Hebworth Abbey! and now he tells me with the greatest composure, that neither the baronetcy nor Hebworth is his! By the bye, I recollect he told me not to allow any contingencies to enter into my estimate of his position and pros-

pects, just as if he had foreseen my present difficulty. By Jove, it is a case of swindle after all! And yet—no—no, he is honest. The whole bearing and character of the man shew that he is honest—only weak, and not very wise. I wish I saw my way well out of it. To withdraw my consent to his marriage with Bertha, immediately after his brother's death, would appear harsh, and I should be condemned by the world. People would say, of course, that I was influenced solely by the change in his circumstances. What a shame it is! I will undertake to say that there is not one man in the county, who, if he were similarly situated, would not wish to break off the engagement; and yet, if I were to take such a step, there is not one of them who would not abuse me for my worldliness. Poor Bertha, too; she loves him for himself, that's clear, and I am very much mistaken in her character if she would give him up so very easily! I wish I could take some steps to prove the young brat a bastard. It would really be only right, for I would lay any wager he *is* one, if the

truth were known. But then *he*, of all persons in the world, comes in my way. Why he seemed as angry when I hinted at the child's illegitimacy, as most men would have been, had I undertaken to prove the reverse! Weak, weak—dreadfully weak, but honest. Confound his honesty! After all, the child is but six months old, and the returns show that one half the children born die within the first year. Besides, the mother will probably bring him to England soon, and a long journey with so young a child, will give us a chance. Not that I wish the young scamp any harm—far from it; but still he has come into the world in a most objectionable manner, and considering the sort of education he is likely to have, with some low Italian girl for a mother, it is almost a kindness to wish him well out of it. At any rate, I think I see my course pretty clearly. I cannot send Egerton about his business, merely on the ground of his fallen fortunes; nor, indeed would it be advisable, until I know something about the child's health and strength. Poor Bertha! I pity her from my soul."

Egerton had felt an almost instinctive dread that the news from Italy would in some manner affect his relations to Mr. Campbell, and was most agreeably surprised on finding himself received at Oakwood with the same cordiality as before. On one or two occasions, indeed, about a week or ten days after the events above recorded, he thought he perceived a little stiffness and irritability in Mr. Campbell's manner towards him, which he had not observed before, but they soon passed away, and led to no serious consequences.

This state of things, however, was not destined to last for ever. About three weeks after Egerton had heard of his brother's death, as he was sitting one day at luncheon with the family at Oakwood, a letter was placed in his hands. Having first asked Mr. Campbell's permission, he broke the seal and read the contents.

"It is from Robertson," said Egerton, eagerly, "I shall now learn how my sister-in-law, and the young baronet are going on."

Mr. Campbell's brows contracted slightly at

this remark, but he said nothing. He cast, however, repeated glances at Egerton's face as if he wished to read in it the nature of the news in which he felt so deep an interest.

"I am happy to say," exclaimed Egerton, gaily "that the accounts are excellent. My nephew is a fine, strong, lively boy. Robertson says that he is the picture of health, and thriving splendidly. He is very like my poor brother, but has his mother's eyes. God bless him! How I long to see the young rascal!"

"Why the man is a perfect fool!" said Mr. Campbell to himself; "that is downright Quixotism."

"They will be here in the Autumn," continued Egerton, little dreaming the effect his words were producing; "I wish the time were here already. I shall go over to Hebworth a little before, and see that everything is prepared for the reception of Lady Egerton. I should like her to have a warm welcome on her arrival. What do you say, Bertha, to our driving over to Hebworth very early some morning, and making

a long day of it? I should like to have the assistance of your taste in the arrangements for my sister's reception."

This was too much for Mr Campbell. Egerton's undisguised joy at his nephew's flourishing condition had already irritated him beyond all measure, but the suggestion, that Bertha should superintend the arrangements for the reception of the lowborn Italian girl, and that too, at that very Hebworth, at which she might at one time have expected to be similarly welcomed herself, exasperated him to such a degree, that he could no longer conceal his indignation.

"Miss Campbell," he said, in a voice trembling with anger, "will have more important things to engage her attention, and must therefore decline the honour you had intended for her, of preparing for the reception of the Italian lady, and her son."

Egerton looked up in astonishment. He had been so absorbed in Robertson's letter, that he had not observed the effect its contents, accompanied by his own comments, had produced on Mr. Campbell.

He turned to Bertha for an explanation, but she made a hasty sign to him that he had better not pursue the subject in any way. He took her advice, and the meal was concluded in an almost Pythagorean silence.

"I had no idea he had been such a fool as that, when I accepted him as a son in law," said Mr. Campbell to himself, as he entered his study and shut the door.

CHAPTER XII.

On the morning succeeding the day of the little scene we have just recounted, Mr. Campbell was sitting in his study, when the door opened, and Mr. Walker was announced.

"Good morning, Mr. Walker," said Mr. Campbell, with more than usual stiffness of manner, "I have not much time to-day, and can only spare you a few minutes; but pray take a chair."

"He seems to be in a very bad humour," thought the attorney.

"I will not take up much of your valuable time, Mr. Campbell, and have only called to say that I have seen the parties about the piece we want to exchange. Johnson is dreadfully obstinate. He says his client is as anxious for the exchange as before, but he sticks to what he told me when I saw him last. He says that without the release of 1829, you can make out no marketable title to Beechan's Bit, and that he cannot allow old Harewood to sign until that deed is forthcoming."

"That Johnson is an old fool, and Harewood too. What did you say to that?"

"I told him it was all nonsense, that the deed was lost, and that it was absurd to make such a fuss about some five-and-twenty acres. But this had no effect on him whatever, so I thought I would try another tack. I told him that a complete agreement could be established out of old Harewood's letters; that if he made any further difficulties, you would probably file a bill for specific performance, and that no Court of Equity would consider the absence of that deed a valid

objection to the title. But one might as well talk to a sign post. He simply repeated, 'bring us the release, Mr. Walker, and we will sign, but not before.'"

"Well, what is to be done?"

"I have no idea, Mr. Campbell, unless to have another search for the deed in question."

"I will trouble you to ring the bell."

Mr. Walker obeyed.

"Go to the store room, Thomas," said Mr. Campbell, "and fetch the green box that stands on the top shelf in the right hand corner. I don't think I have opened that box for years," he continued, addressing Mr. Walker, "and I am pretty sure it is not there, but there can be no harm in looking, at any rate."

In a few minutes Thomas brought in the green box, and Mr. Campbell, having taken a small key from a drawer in his escritoire, opened it, and commenced his search. After turning out several bundles of papers, he came to a thick packet of old letters, which he regarded for a minute or two with an expression of greater

feeling than he was in the habit of shewing. Mr. Walker's curiosity was excited. He saw that the papers in Mr. Campbell's hand had not the slightest resemblance to a deed; but the distance was too great to allow of his reading the label on the outside, and thus ascertaining what they were.

"Have you found it, sir?" said Mr. Walker at last.

"No," replied Mr. Campbell, "not yet. I was looking at a bundle of old love-letters that passed between my father and mother in the days of their courtship. I have never read them myself, nor do I mean that anybody else shall. I do not think that any man, not even a son, has a right to pry into such confidences as these, and yet I cannot quite bring myself to burn them."

Mr. Campbell laid down the packet among the other papers, and proceeded to rummage among the remaining contents of the box.

"It is not there, that's clear," said Mr. Campbell. "By the way, there is another box of papers in the store room, which I remember to

have had down a couple of years ago. It may possibly be in that."

Mr. Campbell rang the bell.

"Go to the store room again, Thomas, and bring me the box with the two locks, and bound with iron at the corners."

Thomas left the room, but returned almost immediately; he had not been able to find the box in question.

"Where can your eyes be, Thomas? I am sure it is there. Go and look again. I believe, though, I had better go myself, these people are so stupid. I shall be back directly, Mr. Walker, and unless I am much mistaken, we shall find what we want after all."

Mr. Campbell left the room.

The door was hardly shut, when Mr. Walker darted towards the mysterious letters. They were labelled:

"Letters between my father and mother, in the years ——, not to be read by any one, but to be burnt after my death.

"J. CAMPBELL."

There was somethng very piquant about letters that nobody was ever to read, and Mr. Walker could not resist the temptation of taking the packet to the window to examine its exterior a little more narrowly. He calculated on Mr. Campbell's absence lasting at least five minutes, but in this he was mistaken. Somewhat more than half that period may have elapsed, when he heard Mr. Campbell's hand on the handle of the door. There was no time to return the packet to its former place among the heap of papers, and not wishing to be discovered with it in his hand, he hastily thrust it into the breast pocket of his coat, and looked out of the window.

"How stupid these servants are to be sure!" said Mr. Campbell, as he entered the room, "why the box stared me in the face the instant I opened the store room door. Thomas will bring it in as soon as he has dusted it, and this time I hope we shall not have had all our trouble in vain."

The box was brought in and opened. After

taking out a very few papers, Mr. Campbell seized upon a grim looking deed, endorsed, "Release of Beechan's Bit, &c., &c."

"There it is at last. Well, I am very glad we have found it."

"Oh, dear, what shall I do?" thought Mr. Walker, "he will now put back the papers in the other box, and miss the letters."

Mr. Walker sidled towards the heap of parchment in the hopes of being able to restore the packet unseen, but in vain. Mr. Campbell gave him no opportunity for doing so, and he considered himself lost.

After a little conversation about the title to Beechan's Bit, Mr. Campbell exclaimed:

"But what is the matter, Mr. Walker? You look quite pale; are you ill?"

"Only a little overdone by the heat of the weather," muttered the attorney.

"You will be the better for some luncheon. I'll order it directly. Just throw those papers into the green box, will you please; and we will then have a sandwich and a glass of sherry."

"Hurrah! now I can pop them in again nicely," thought Mr. Walker; "but why should I? he will lock up the box and not take it down again for years, perhaps, and as I am to put the deeds back, he will not miss the packet. It may be rather amusing, and at any rate I should like to have a peep at those letters which nobody is ever to read."

Mr. Walker locked up the green box with unspeakable satisfaction, and gave Mr. Campbell the key. He began to breathe more freely, and in short, felt no longer "cribbed, cabined, or confined," but quite "himself again."

After a couple of glasses of wine, Mr. Walker felt revived, but still he had only transacted one half of his business, and he experienced a peculiar palpitation of the heart, while considering the best manner of introducing the other half. At last, summoning up all his courage, he raised his glass to his lips, and said:

"Here is a health to Sir Henry—I beg your pardon—I mean Mr. Egerton, and the future Mrs. Egerton."

Mr. Campbell winced a little, and acknowledged Mr. Walker's politeness by a stiff bow.

"I think I see which way the wind lies," thought Mr. Walker.

"Curious story that, Mr. Campbell, about Sir William's marrying a poor Italian girl, and keeping it secret from Sir Roderick."

"Very much so," replied Mr. Campbell, drily.

"More curious perhaps, than the world in general is aware of," continued Mr. Walker.

Mr. Campbell looked hard at the attorney, for there was something in the manner as well as the matter of the last remark, which excited his curiosity.

"Perhaps Walker has heard the rights of the case," thought he, "and knows that there was no real marriage."

"Are you acquainted with any facts connected with it, not known to others, Mr. Walker?"

"Not exactly facts connected with that marriage," replied Mr. Walker.

"You are very mysterious, sir, this morning. May I ask to what facts you *do* allude?"

"I was only thinking, Mr. Campbell, that it was a curious coincidence, that one of Sir Roderick's sons should have married in a manner so highly at variance with what his father's wishes would have been, and that the other should contemplate a similar step."

"A similar step! what am I to understand by that remark? You surely don't mean to institute a comparison between Miss Campbell and the Italian girl, who is now known, and, as I believe, most falsely, as Lady Egerton."

"Oh, my dear sir, you have quite misunderstood me, I assure you. Nothing could be further from my thoughts than to compare Miss Campbell, the best and fairest of her sex, indeed, I may say, 'the sinecure of every eye,' with the low person to whom you allude. I ought to have kept my thoughts to myself perhaps; but having said thus much, I will merely add that Sir William's marriage, or sham marriage, seemed to me a curious coincidence, considering his father's

ridiculous objections to his brother Henry's engagement."

"Why you must have been lunching before you came here, sir," replied Mr. Campbell angrily, "Sir Roderick died eight or nine months before his son's engagement, and could not therefore object to it. Besides," he continued very stiffly, "I have no reason to suppose that Sir Roderick could consider his family as in any way dishonored by an alliance with one of the coheiresses of Oakwood Hall."

"Ah,—of course—yes—I suppose so," said Mr. Walker.

"What the devil, Mr. Walker, *do* you mean?" said Mr. Campbell, now fairly roused.

"It was very foolish of me, very," replied Mr. Walker, "I ought to have held my tongue; but as an old friend of the family—"

Mr. Walker paused.

"Well, sir, pray proceed. You were going to remark that, as an old friend of the family—"

Mr. Walker saw his client's intense excitement and began to feel uneasy.

"Perhaps I had better not say anything more, Mr. Campbell. Nothing could be further from my wishes than to annoy you in any way, and—and now pray don't be angry, pray don't, I meant it all for the best."

"You must judge for yourself, sir, whether you think proper to explain your most incomprehensible conduct in insinuating that Sir Roderick would have objected to his son's marriage with Miss Campbell. But allow me to observe, that if you do not explain it, I shall be cautious in future how I expose myself to the possibility of a repetition of such an insulting supposition."

"I am sure, Mr. Campbell, I shall be most happy to explain my meaning. Only pray remember afterwards, that it was at your own express desire, that I do so, and if you feel hurt or offended, it is not—"

"To the point, sir, to the point. No more words, but tell me what the devil you mean."

"Have you never heard of the letter Sir Roderick Egerton wrote to you on his death bed,

and of the scenes with Mr. Egerton which preceded it?"

"Never. What was its purport?" asked Mr. Campbell huskily.

"I have it in my pocket, and will shew it you directly."

Mr. Walker produced the letter.

Mr. Campbell took the document in question, and read it through. Not wishing Mr. Walker to see the effect it produced on him, he turned towards the window, as if for the purpose of obtaining a better light. He read it a second and a third time without uttering a word; perhaps he was desirous of impressing on his memory every syllable of the insult it conveyed. Mr. Walker was much struck with the expression of his client's face, now absolutely livid with rage, as he retured from the window, and began to pace up and down the room.

"I perceive," said Mr. Campbell at length in a voice of preternatural calmness, "I perceive that the characters are blotted. Can you explain that circumstance?"

"I had the letter in my pocket, sir, when I fell into the water butt—pool I mean, into Hilderton pool. You will probably remember my little adventure at Hilderton pool."

"I do," returned Mr. Campbell. "Pray in what manner did this letter come into your possession?"

"I heard the people at Hebworth had been talking of some violent scenes between Sir Roderick and his son, in which Miss Campbell's name had been introduced in what I considered a disrespectful manner. I accordingly felt it to be my duty to you, Mr. Campbell, as my most generous benefactor, and capital client, sir, to make enquiries, and ultimately succeeded in obtaining this letter from one of the servants, who had found it on the floor of Sir Roderick's room."

"Then all I can say is, Mr. Walker, that you are a confounded, inquisitive, impertinent, busybody, sir, prying into matters with which you have no earthly concern. I may have employed

you as my attorney to put in a distress or to prepare a deed, but I have never entertained the remotest idea of making you a confidant in any of my family affairs; and what's more, sir, if I were a younger man, I should feel much inclined to chastise your damned, meddling insolence on the spot. Do you understand that, sir, I say, do you understand that?"

"Oh, dear, oh, dear! I'm sure I am very sorry, very sorry. I meant all for the best, I—I—meant no offence—no offence."

"But there *is* offence, sir, and great offence too. Take yourself off this instant, Mr. Walker, and never let me see you cross my threshold again."

"But, my dear Mr. Campbell, I assure you—"

"Not a word more, not one word," said Mr. Campbell starting from his chair, and ringing the bell.

"Two hundred a year, aye, sometimes more, gone at one full swoop!" thought Mr. Walker. "What, all my little six and eightpences!" The

thought drove him to desperation, and gave him courage to make one more attempt.

"But really, Mr. Campbell, you have not quite understood how—"

"Shew Mr. Walker out," said Mr. Campbell to tall Thomas, whose six feet one now appeared at the doorway.

"Hang it, if these autographs don't always get a man into a mess!" muttered Mr. Walker to himself, as he crossed the hall, with Thomas giggling behind him.

Mr. Campbell continued to pace the spacious apartment with hasty strides. He felt Mr. Walker's absence to be a great relief, as it enabled him to give full vent to his passion.

"That to me!" he exclaimed, looking at the letter; "that to me, his old college friend! His last act an insult, that I will never forgive! Never, never. Oh, that the proud old fool had lived, that I might have taken some of that precious blood of his, which he valued so dearly! But he shall have his will at any rate. Never shall son of his have daughter of mine! Aye, there

they go!" he continued, watching Egerton and Bertha, who were walking in the garden at a short distance from the house. "There they go; but that's their last meeting in this world. Why, he treats me, the owner of Oakwood, as so much dirt—the cursed puffed up old fool! But he shall have his will. I believe it will break his son's heart, and I hope to Heaven it may. The present Lady Egerton too, some Italian wench that his precious son picked up in the streets of Rome! Ha—ha—ha—it is enough no make him turn in his coffin. It serves him right, it serves him right. He has pretty well done for his son's happiness, at any rate. I believe it will break his heart. But then there is my poor Bertha too! Oh Bertha, Bertha, my child, you little dream of the fate that hangs over you! But she is a good daughter and will forget him in time. And yet I fear he has so completely possessed her imagition, that she will find it no easy matter. How I wish he had never come near the place! And then there is that busybody Mr. Walker too! Why in half-an-hour the story will be all over

Stonecombe, and we shall be having paragraphs in the "Hilderton Gazette" about it. I wish I had not dismissed him in quite so summary a manner. And yet to retract now would be too humiliating. I must do something though, or I shall be the talk of the county in another week."

Mr. Campbell rang the bell and Thomas appeared.

"Tell Evans to ride towards Stonecombe as fast as he can, and tell Mr. Walker, with my compliments, that I wish to see him instantly. If he is quick he may catch him up before he has reached home."

"Master must be clean dazed, or summut," muttered Thomas to himself, as he hastened to obey the order; "he turns master Johnny out of the house one moment, and sends an express for him five minutes afterwards."

Mr. Walker had not got very far on his way home, when Evans overtook him; and within a quarter of an hour after the order had been given, he entered Mr. Campbell's study, with a somewhat doubtful expression on his countenance.

"Perhaps, Mr. Walker," said his client, stiffly, "perhaps I may have been a little too hasty in some of my observations; but I felt a good deal annoyed at what I considered an unwarrantable interference on your part in things which do not concern you. It is possible, however, that your intentions may have been good, and I shall therefore overlook your offence on one condition."

"Oh, Mr. Campbell!" said the attorney, feeling much encouraged, "your words are like balm and honey, sir, to a wounded spirit; your displeasure would—"

"On one condition," said Mr. Campbell, interrupting him, "and on that condition only, can I continue to treat you as before, and leave the conduct of my affairs in your hands."

"The best client I have in the world," muttered Mr. Walker, in an ecstacy of gratitude.

"Accidental circumstances, to which I need not again allude, have made you acquainted with the scene you have mentioned at Hebworth, and

also with my reasons for dissolving my daughter's engagement with Mr. Egerton. Now, sir, the condition of your retaining my business is, that you observe the most perfect discretion with regard to all these matters, and never disclose your knowledge of them to your friends at Stonecombe or elsewhere."

"I give you my most solemn promise, Mr. Campbell never to mention to any living—"

"I am quite satisfied, Mr. Walker. It is so very much to your interest to be silent, that I know I have only to mention the condition to feel sure of its strict observance. And now, sir, we will forget our little conversation of this morning, and as soon as you have got the deeds prepared relating to Beechan's Bit, you may bring them to me to sign. Good morning."

Mr. Walker perceived that the interview was at an end, and left the room with a far lighter heart than he had done a quarter of an hour before.

"I have done for my dear friend, Harry, this time at any rate," thought he to himself; "con-

found the puppy! How he laughed at my whites with the green knees! Perhaps I may still have the taming of Bertha after all."

"I think I have secured that gentleman's silence for the present," said Mr. Campbell to himself, as soon as Mr. Walker had left the room. "He would not like to lose me as a client if he could help it. And now I must carry out the wishes of the late Sir Roderick by parting the lovers. He little thought when he wrote that letter, that it would supply me with a good pretext for doing what I had already been wishing to do without it. It comes just at the right moment. It is a very disagreeable business, but it cannot be helped, and the sooner I get it over the better."

Mr. Campbell rang the bell.

"Is Mr. Egerton here?"

"I believe so, sir," said Thomas.

"Tell him that, if he is disengaged, I should be glad to see him in my study."

Two minutes afterwards Egerton entered the room.

The scene at luncheon the day before had prepared him for something disagreeable, and his fears were confirmed the instant he saw Mr. Campbell's face.

"Pray be seated, Mr. Egerton," said Mr. Campbell, pointing to a chair.

Egerton obeyed.

"May I ask you if you have ever seen that letter before?"

Egerton glanced at the letter, and the well-known characters in which its words of passion were traced brought up the final scenes at Hebworth with such painful vividness to his mind, that he had great difficulty in commanding his feelings sufficiently to reply.

"No, Mr. Campbell, I have not," he replied, after a short pause. "It is true, I heard that Sir Roderick had written something of the kind, but in the confusion that followed immediately upon his death, the letter was mislaid, and I have never seen it till this moment."

"Am I to understand, Mr. Egerton, that you were fully acquainted with the nature of Sir

Roderick's sentiments towards myself and my family," continued Mr. Campbell, with extreme formality of manner, and very pale.

"Certainly, sir; I was quite aware of those sentiments, and the difference of our opinions formed the subject of the most painful altercation I ever had in my life."

"Then, sir, I can only say that you would have shown far better taste if you had not renewed your acquaintance with my family, and endeavoured to gain my daughter's affections. I presume, Mr. Egerton, that you are man of the world enough to know the only course which is left open to me under the present circumstances?"

"It would be affectation in me to pretend that I do not understand you, Mr. Campbell; but I must beg to differ from you entirely in the conclusion at which you appear to have arrived."

"Do you think, Mr. Egerton, that I would allow my daughter to enter any family except on terms of perfect equality? Do you think I

would allow her to marry a man whose father, if he were living, would have spurned her from his door as a disgrace to his ancestry? You little know me, sir, if you entertain such a thought for an instant. Your father is dead, and I therefore cannot express openly in words the opinion I entertain of the unprovoked insult contained in that letter. But I can express it in deeds, Mr. Egerton, by carrying out his wishes to the full; and I must therefore beg you to consider your engagement to Miss Campbell as entirely at an end from this moment."

"Really, Mr. Campbell, I must protest against your view of the case as equally unjust both to your daughter and myself. I am of age, and quite my own master in every respect. I was of age at the time my father wrote that letter, and protested as strongly then against his sentiments on the subject, as I now am obliged to do against your own. I loved my father most sincerely, and admired his many noble qualities, but there were several points on which our opinions were in direct opposition. The

subject of rank and birth was one of them, and I beg to assure you, on the word of a man of honour, that I utterly and entirely repudiate the sentiments which dictated that most objectionable letter. I hope, Mr. Campbell, that this declaration on my part will satisfy your wounded feelings, and that you will not abide by a decision which, if persisted in, will destroy my own happiness, and, allow me to add, will very materially affect that of your daughter also."

"Satisfied, Mr. Egerton! Not the least satisfied. I would not allow my daughter to marry a Prince of the Blood after receiving such an insult as that."

"But you forget, Mr. Campbell, that at this moment I am completely master of my own actions, and that I have no relations living who will not be proud to receive Miss Campbell on terms of equality. In a certain sense, I may be regarded as the present head of my house, for although strictly speaking, that designation belongs now to my infant nephew, and the baronetcy has not devolved upon—"

"Never mind the baronetcy, Mr. Egerton. That has nothing whatever to do with the present question. I repeat that if you were the oldest Duke in the kingdom, nothing should induce me to give you my daughter. Your allusion to the baronetcy, to which you appear to attach so much importance—I say your allusion to the baronetcy, does not strike me as being in the best taste, and only strengthens me in the conviction that although your attachment to my daughter may have induced you to smother the feeling, in your heart you share the absurd pride of your race."

During the former part of the conversation Egerton had kept in mind that he was speaking to Bertha's father, and endeavoured to adopt as moderate a tone as was consistent with the frank expression of his feelings. But when he heard Mr. Campbell's last most insulting remark, he felt that he was beginning to lose his self-control, and paused for an instant to recover it before he replied.

"I should be sorry, Mr. Campbell," he said

at length in a low tone, "I should be sorry to entertain any other feeling, than those of respect for the father of Miss Campbell, or to use any language I might afterwards regret. But I cannot allow your last remark to pass without expressing my great surprise at the insult to my honour which it conveys. The manner in which I alluded to the baronetcy—"

"The baronetcy again," said Mr. Campbell impatiently.

"I say the manner in which I alluded to the baronetcy showed the very slight importance which I attach to it. And besides this, not five minutes have elapsed since I assured you on the word of a man of honour, that I did not share my late father's sentiments on these subjects. I leave it to your sense of justice to determine whether you will retract the imputation you have thought proper to cast on my candour."

"I retract nothing, sir. Not one word do I retract. You think to bandy words with me about your honour and your sentiments and

Heaven knows what besides. I could have wished that you had had sense enough to see the only course which my duty both to myself and daughter has rendered imperative, and to surrender freely and at once those claims which you have only acquired through my ignorance of the extent of your father's frailties. Had you done so, we might have parted at least on comparatively good terms. Your consummate folly has now rendered this impossible, and—no don't interrupt me—I say your consummate folly has rendered this quite out of the question, and I must beg that your visits to my house may be discontinued from this moment."

Egerton saw that further remonstrance would be useless as long as Mr. Campbell was in his present mood, and left the room without uttering another word. He immediately repaired to Bertha's boudoir, and found her looking pale and anxious.

"What *is* the matter, Henry?" she said as he entered the room. "Mary has just been here, and she told me that she heard papa engaged in

an angry discussion with you as she passed the study door."

"Your father, Bertha, has discovered something that I would rather not have told you, but I have no choice. Had Sir Roderick known you, dearest, I am sure he must have loved you, and been proud to own you as a daughter. Unfortunately he never saw you, and on his death-bed expressed himself very strongly against my asking you to be my wife. He even wished me to promise that I would never marry you; but as I felt that he had no right to attempt to shackle my future choice in such a question, I resisted all his importunity, and the result was a very painful scene between us. He also wrote a few angry lines to the same purport to Mr. Campbell, but the letter was not sent, nor even finished. Somehow or other, it has now fallen into your father's hands, and has so exasperated him, that he has just told me, Bertha, he will never consent to our union."

"But he *has* consented!" exclaimed Bertha, deadly pale.

"He now says that he withdraws that consent, and has begged me to consider our engagement at an end."

"He cannot do that. He has no right to do that," said Bertha hurriedly; "it is too late, too late. And what did you reply?"

"I told him that I am my own master, and have never shared the prejudices which led my father to write that objectionable letter. But it was to no purpose. He was so extremely excited that he put a false construction on all my words, and—"

"And what?" asked Bertha anxiously.

"And used language, which from any other man than your father, Bertha, I should have resented as insulting to my honour."

"I must see my father directly," said Bertha, rising, and about to leave the room.

"One instant, Bertha! If you speak to him in his present mood it will produce no effect. He is not in a state of mind to listen to reason."

"Let me ask you one question, Henry. Is

there anything that Sir Roderick has either said or written, or that my father has said to you just now, that makes you wish to dissolve our engagement?"

"God forbid!" said Egerton fervently. "I love you with my whole soul, my whole being. Were we to part for ever from this moment, your image, and the memory of what we have been to each other, would follow me through life."

"Then, Henry, I am yours for ever," said Bertha, placing her hand in his.

He pressed her to his heart, and kissed her passionately.

"Had my father interfered in the first instance," she continued, "I might perhaps have never given you my love; but he encouraged our attachment rather than opposed it. It was with his full consent that I have promised you my hand, and he has no right to demand now that I should retract that promise."

"But what shall we do to allay the animosity which he appears to have conceived against me so suddenly?"

"I will go to him directly," said Bertha, "and tell him—"

"He will not listen to you."

"But he *must* listen to me. I have a *right* to be heard. I have always shewn him a daughter's obedience till now; but if he demands a tame, passive obedience, in which I am to shut my eyes to the distinction between right and wrong, he demands what I never can give. Nothing but a change in my feelings or the utter impossibility of our obtaining the means of support, could justify me in violating vows so solemnly given as those which I have given you."

"He will disinherit you, Bertha."

"I hope not. I hope to soften him, and that he will eventually listen to reason. But if he does not—and I confess it would be very painful to me to marry without his consent—but if he does not, I have a little money of my own; you have some too, and besides that, Lord Windworth has promised you an appointment. But I do not like to think of such things. I hope papa will relent."

"God bless you, Bertha! I never knew you before. Woman as you are, you have a man's strength, and—"

"You begin to be afraid I shall exercise some of that quality upon you," said Bertha, with a momentary smile. "No fear of that. I feel that I am indeed but a poor weak woman towards you, Henry. Weak towards you, but not for you," she continued. "Had I not recognized in you my master, I should never have given you my heart. But I will go to my father at once, for I shall know no peace till I have put an end to this dreadful state of suspense."

"I think I had better go with you," said Egerton.

They left the room together, and proceeded to Mr. Campbell's study. Bertha entered first, and Egerton followed her.

"My dear father," said Bertha, "Henry has just told me that you have declared it to be your intention to withdraw your consent to our union. But surely there is some mistake. It was with your full approbation that—"

"My dear Bertha, you will save both yourself and me a great deal of pain by submitting quietly to what is unavoidable. There is no mistake whatever. I have already withdrawn that consent, and am a great deal surprised that after what has just passed between us, Mr. Egerton should think proper to attempt to renew the subject in any way. I thought, sir," continued Mr. Campbell, turning to Egerton, "that I had expressed myself sufficiently intelligibly before, and am at a loss to know on what grounds you can justify your remaining in my house after being made acquainted with my wishes."

"Father! father!" cried Bertha passionately, "you forget that you have given him your word—the word of a man of honour; that I have plighted him my faith; that I have given him my whole heart, without which that faith would be worthless, and that I *ought* not, indeed, that I *cannot*, recall such solemn pledges at the command of another; no, not even at the command of a father."

"Why, Bertha, you forget yourself. Where is your obedience? What I have done has been solely out of consideration for that respect which we both of us owe to ourselves. You seem, Mr. Egerton, to have employed your most unfortunate influence over my daughter in no very praiseworthy manner—to make her forget indeed the first and paramount duty of a child towards a parent."

"I cannot conceive it to be the duty of a child, Mr. Campbell, to break a promise solemnly given, even though her father commands her to do so, and especially where the promise has been made with the father's sanction. Had Bertha herself been anxious to—"

"Miss Campbell, sir, if you please."

"Had Miss Campbell wished to dissolve the engagement between us—"

"Ah, in that case you would not have brought an action for breach of promise," said Mr. Campbell, bitterly. "Very considerate indeed. Now, look here, Mr. Egerton. Just ask my tenants, ask my neighbours, or ask my daughter

here, if you like, whether I am in the habit of allowing myself to be talked over when I have once made up my mind. I flatter myself you will hear but one answer from all of them. Now, I beg to state once for all, that my mind is made up on this subject. You never shall marry my daughter with my consent. She has always been an obedient child as yet, and I do not anticipate that she will set up her will in opposition to mine in the present instance. I think we had better end this conversation here, for it is not a particularly pleasant one, and nothing can be gained by prolonging it."

"My dear father," said Bertha, "I cannot leave you, indeed I cannot, without making one appeal to your love for me, if not to your sense of justice to us both. Is my happiness of no value in your eyes? Do you think that my attachment to Henry is a mere passing whim to be indulged to-day and laid aside to-morrow? You have strong feelings yourself, and must be able to judge what mine are now. I tell you that unless you wish to render me miserable—most miserable—you will not—"

Bertha burst into tears. Her emotion however seemed to irritate Mr. Campbell rather than soften him. Turning round fiercely to Egerton, he exclaimed:

"There, sir; that is your work! This house was happy enough till you crossed its threshold, and introduced discord between father and daughter. Leave the room, Bertha," he continued, "I have a few words more to say to Mr. Egerton."

Bertha moved towards the door. Just as she had reached it, she turned to Egerton and said, "My views of my duty, Henry, differ from those of my father. He has retracted his promise, but I do not retract mine."

"Leave the room, Bertha," repeated Mr. Campbell.

Bertha obeyed.

"I have only to add, Mr. Egerton, that if you really entertain one tenth of the feeling towards Miss Campbell, which you profess, you will never attempt to see her again; for I give you my word that Miss Campbell shall never have one penny from me if she does not instantly cease all inter-

course with you. The interest of her own property would about provide her with gloves and hair pins, so you see that unless you comply with my wishes to the letter, you will be her worst enemy. I give you my word, I will disinherit her."

"Your *word*, sir?" said Egerton, with a somewhat bitter emphasis on the substantive.

"And to avoid the possibility of mistake," continued Mr. Campbell, trembling with passion, "your conduct this day has so utterly disgusted me, that I hope I may never see you again, either here or elsewhere. Should we ever meet by accident, it must be as entire strangers. You have so entirely lost my confidence and goodwill by your disgraceful conduct in endeavouring to introduce a rebellious spirit into this once happy home, that I tell you candidly, I would not cross the street to save you from ruin. And now I will wish you good morning. Or shall I ring for the servant to show you the door?"

Egerton left the room. Bertha joined him in the hall.

"I am of age," she whispered hurriedly. "Be true to me, Henry, and no father's tyranny shall make me swerve in my faith to you. But it is better we should part now, for a time, and, perhaps, when he sees how wretched I am, he may yet be softened. Write to me soon."

"God bless you, Bertha!" said Egerton, kissing her. "I will let you know my address. I shall leave Stonecombe to-night. Wish Mary good bye for me."

With these words, he once more pressed her to his heart, and then hurried from the house.

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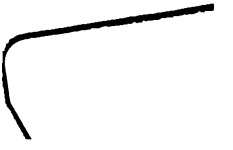
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